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HAIL AND FAREWELL

AVE

BY

GEORGE MOORE

Carra Edition

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AVE

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OVERTURE

IN 1894 Edward Martyn and I were living in the Temple, I in a garret in King's Bench Walk, he in a garret in Pump Court. At this time I was very poor and had to work for my living, writing all the hours of the day some chapter of *Esther Waters* or of *Modern Painting.* After dinner I often returned to my work, but towards midnight a wish to go out to speak to somebody would come upon me: Edward returned about that time from his club, and it was my wont to step down to Pump Court, where I was sure of finding him seated in his high, canonical chair, sheltered by a screen, reading his book, his glass of grog beside him, his long clay pipe in his hand; and we often talked literature and drama until two or three in the morning.

"I wish I knew enough Irish to write my plays in Irish," he said one night, speaking out of himself suddenly.

"You'd like to write your plays in Irish!" I exclaimed. "I thought nobody did anything in Irish except bring turf from the bog and say prayers."

Edward did not answer, and when I pressed him he said:

"You've always lived in France and England, and don't know Ireland."

"But I do. Don't I remember the boatmen speaking to each other in Irish on Lough Carra? And Father James Browne preaching in Irish in Carnacun? But I've never heard of anybody wanting to write in it . . . and plays, too!"

"Everything is different now; a new literature is springing up."

"In Irish?"

My interest was stirred, and my brain fluttered with ideas regarding the relation of the poem to the language in which it was born.

"A new language to enwomb new thoughts," I cried out to Edward.

On the subject of nationality in art one can talk a long while, and it was past one o'clock when I groped my way down the rough-timbered staircase, lit by dusty lanterns, and wandered from Pump Court into the cloister, loitering by the wigmaker's shop in the dim corner, so like what London must have been once, some hundreds of years after the Templars. . . . There was their church! And, standing before the carven porch, I thought what a happy accident it was that Edward Martyn and myself had drifted into the Temple, the last vestige of old London—"combining," as someone has said, "the silence of the cloister with the licence of the brothel"—Edward attracted by the church of the Templars, I by the fleeting mistress, so it pleased me to think.

"One is making for the southern gate, hoping that the aged porter will pull the string and let her pass out without molesting her with observations."

But to bring him forth she had to knock at the door with the handle of her umbrella, and, when the door closed behind her, there seemed to be nothing in the Temple but silence and moonlight: a round moon sailing westward let fall a cold ray along the muddy foreshore and along the river, revealing some barges moored in midstream.

"The tide is out," I said, and I wondered at the spots and gleams of light, amid the shrubs in the garden, till I began to wonder at my own wonderment, for, after all, this was not the first time the moon had sailed over Lam-

beth. Even so the spectacle of the moonlit gardens and the river excited me to the point of making me forget my bed; and, watching the white torch of Jupiter and the red ember of Mars, I began to think of the soul which Edward Martyn had told me I had lost in Paris and in London, and if it were true that whoever cast off tradition is like a tree transplanted into uncongenial soil. Tourguenieff was of that opinion: "Russia can do without any one of us, but none of us can do without Russia"—one of his sentimental homilies grown wearisome from constant repetition, true, perhaps, of Russia, but utterly untrue of Ireland. Far more true would it be to say that an Irishman must fly from Ireland if he would be himself. Englishmen, Scotchmen, Jews, do well in Ireland —Irishmen never; even the patriot has to leave Ireland to get a hearing. We must leave Ireland; and I did well to listen in Montmartre. All the same, a remembrance of Edward Martyn's conversation could not be stifled. Had I not myself written, only half conscious of the truth, that art must be parochial in the beginning to become cosmopolitan in the end? And isn't a great deal of the flavour of a poem owing to the language it is written in? If Dante had continued his comedy in Latin! He wrote two cantos in Latin. Or was it two stanzas?

"So Ireland is awaking at last out of the great sleep of Catholicism!" And I walked about the King's Bench Walk, thinking what a wonderful thing it would be to write a book in a new language or in an old language revived and sharpened to literary usage for the first time. We men of letters are always sad when we hear of a mode of literary expression not available to us, or a subject we cannot treat. After discussing the Humbert case for some time, Dujardin and a friend fell to talking of what a wonderful subject it would have been for Balzac, and I listened to them in sad silence. "Moore is sad,"

Dujardin said. "He is always sad when he hears a subject which he may never hope to write."

"The Humbert case being involved in such a mass of French jurisprudence that——" And they laughed at me.

But in the Temple, in Edward's rooms, I had heard that a new literature was springing up in my own parish, and forthwith began to doubt if the liberty my father's death had given me was an unmixed blessing.

"The talent I brought into the world might have produced rarer fruit if it had been cultivated less sedulously. Ballinrobe or the Nouvelle Athènes—which?"

The bitterness of my meditation was relieved, somewhat, on remembering that those who had remained in Ireland had written nothing of any worth—miserable stuff, no novel of any seriousness, only broad farce. Lever and Lover and a rudiment, a peasant whose works I had once looked into, and whose name it was impossible to remember. "Strange that Ireland should have produced so little literature, for there is a pathos in Ireland, in its people, in its landscapes, and in its ruins."

And that night I roamed in imagination from castle to castle, following them from hillside to hillside, along the edges of the lake, going up a staircase built between the thickness of the walls, and on to the ramparts, remembering that Castle Carra must have been a great place some four or five hundred years ago. Only the centre of the castle remains; but the headland is covered with ruins, overgrown with thorn and hazel; great men must have gone forth from Castle Carra; and Castle Island and Castle Hag were defended with battle-axe and sword, and these were wielded as tremendously, from island to island, and along the shores of my lake, as ever they were under the walls of Troy. But of what use are such deeds if there be no chroniclers to relate them? Heroes are dependent upon chroniclers, and Ireland never pro-

duced any, only a few rather foolish bards, no one who could rank with Froissart; and I thought of my friend up in Pump Court writing by a window, deep set in a castle wall, a history of his times. That was just the sort of thing he might do, and do very well, for he is painstaking. An heroic tale of robbers issuing from the keep of Castle Carra and returning with cattle and a beautiful woman would be more than he could accomplish. I had heard of Grania for the first time that night, and she might be written about; but not by me, for only what my eye has seen, and my heart has felt, interests me. A book about the turbulent life of Castle Carra would be merely inventions, *cela ne serait que du chiqué;* I should be following in the tracks of other *marchands de camelote,* Scott and Stevenson, and their like. But modern Ireland! What of it as a subject for artistic treatment?

And noiselessly, like a ghost, modern Ireland glided into my thoughts, ruinous as ancient Ireland, more so, for she is clothed not only with the ruins of the thirteenth century, but with the ruins of every succeeding century. In Ireland we have ruins of several centuries standing side by side, from the fifth to the eighteenth. By the ruins of Castle Carra stand the ruins of a modern house, to which the chieftains of Castle Carra retired when brigandage declined; and the life that was lived there is evinced by the great stone fox standing in the middle of the courtyard—was evinced, for within the last few years the fox and the two hounds of gigantic stature on either side of the gateway have been overthrown.

When I was a small child I used to go with my mother and governess to Castle Carra for goat's milk, and we picnicked in the great banqueting-hall overgrown with ivy. "If ever the novel I am dreaming is written, *Ruin and Weed* shall be its title—ruined castles in a weedy

country. In Ireland men and women die without realizing any of the qualities they bring into the world," and I remembered those I had known long ago, dimly, and in fragments, as one remembers pictures—the colour of a young woman's hair, an old woman's stoop, a man's bulk; and then a group of peasants trooped past me—Mulhair recognized by his stubbly chin, Pat Plunket by his voice, Carabine by his eyes—and these were followed by recollection of an old servant, Appleby, his unstarched collar and the frock-coat too large for him which he wore always, and his covert dislike of the other servants in the house, especially the old housemaids.

All these people have gone to their rest; they are all happily forgotten, no one ever thinks of them; but to me they are clearer than they were in life, because the present changes so quickly that we are not aware of our life at the moment of living it. But the past never changes; it is like a long picture-gallery. Many of the pictures are covered with grey cloths, as is usual in picture-galleries; but we can uncover any picture we wish to see, and not infrequently a cloth will fall as if by magic, revealing a forgotten one, and it is often as clear in outline and as fresh in paint as a Van der Meer.

That night in the Temple I met a memory as tender in colour and outline as the Van der Meer in the National Gallery. It was at the end of a long summer's day, five-and-twenty years ago, that I first saw her among some ruins in the Dublin mountains, and in her reappearance she seemed so startlingly like Ireland that I felt she formed part of the book I was dreaming, and that nothing of the circumstances in which I found her could be changed or altered. My thoughts fastened on to her, carrying me out of the Temple, back to Ireland, to the time when the ravages of the Land League had recalled me from the Nouvelle Athènes—a magnificent, young Montmartrian, with a blonde beard *à la Capoul,* trousers hang-

ing wide over the foot, and a hat so small that my sister had once mistaken it for her riding-hat.

And still in my Montmartrian clothes I had come back from the West with a story in my head, which could only be written in some poetical spot, probably in one of the old houses among the Dublin mountains, built there in the eighteenth century. And I had set out to look for one on a hot day in July when the trees in Merrion Square seemed like painted trees, so still were they in the grey silence; the sparrows had ceased to twitter; the carmen spat without speaking, too weary to solicit my fare; and the horses continued to doze on the bridles. "Even the red brick," I said, "seems to weary in the heat. Too hot a day for walking, but I must walk if I'm to sleep to-night."

My way led through Stephen's Green, and the long decay of Dublin that began with the Union engaged my thoughts, and I fared sighing for the old-time mansions that had been turned into colleges and presbyteries. There were lodging-houses in Harcourt Street, and beyond Harcourt Street the town dwindled, first into small shops, then into shabby-genteel villas; at Terenure, I was among cottages, and within sight of purple hills, and when the Dodder was crossed, at the end of the village street, a great wall began, high as a prison wall; it might well have been mistaken for one, but the trees told it was a park wall, and the great ornamental gateway was a pleasant object. It came into sight suddenly—a great pointed edifice finely designed, and after admiring it I wandered on, crossing an old grey bridge. "The Dodder again," I said. The beautiful green country unfolded, a little melancholy for lack of light and shade, "for lack," I added, "of a ray to gild the fields. A beautiful country falling into ruin. The beauty of neglect—yet there is none in thrift." My eyes followed the long herds wandering knee-deep in succulent herbage, and I remembered

that every other country I had seen was spoilt more or less by human beings, but this country was nearly empty, only an occasional herdsman to remind me of myself in this drift of ruined suburb, with a wistful line of mountains enclosing it, and one road curving among the hills, and everywhere high walls—parks, in the centre of which stand stately eighteenth-century mansions. "How the eighteenth century sought privacy," I said, and walked on dreaming of the lives that were lived in these sequestered domains.

"No road ever wound so beautifully," I cried, "and there are no cottages, only an occasional ruin to make the road attractive. How much more attractive it is now, redeemed from its humanities—large families flowing over doorways, probably in and out of cesspools." I had seen such cottages in the West, and had wished them in ruins, for ruins are wistful, especially when a foxglove finds root-hold in the crannies, and tall grasses flourish round the doorway, and withdrawing my eyes from the pretty cottage, I admired the spotted shade, and the road itself, now twisting abruptly, now winding leisurely up the hill, among woods ascending on my left and descending on my right. But what seemed most wonderful of all was the view that accompanied the road—glimpses of a great plain showing between comely trees shooting out of the hillside—a dim green plain, divided by hedges, traversed by long herds, and enclosed, if I remember rightly, by a line of low grey hills, far, ever so far, away.

"All the same, the road ascends very steeply," I growled, beginning to doubt the veracity of the agent who had informed me that a house existed in the neighbourhood. "In the neighbourhood," I repeated, for the word appeared singularly inappropriate. "In the solitude," he should have said.

A little higher up in the hills a chance herdsman of-

fered me some goat's milk; but it was like drinking Camembert cheese, and the least epicurean amongst us would prefer his milk and cheese separate. He had no other, and, in answer to my questions regarding a house to let, said there was one a mile up the road: Mount Venus.

"Mount Venus! Who may have given it that name?"

The question brought all his stupidity into his face, and after a short talk with him about his goats, I said I must be getting on to Mount Venus . . . if it be no more than a mile.

Nothing in Ireland lasts long except the miles, and the last mile to Mount Venus is the longest mile in Ireland; and the road is the steepest. It wound past another ruined cottage, and then a gateway appeared—heavy wrought-iron gates hanging between great stone pillars, the drive ascending through lonely grass-lands with no house in view, for the house lay on the thither side of the hill, a grove of beech-trees reserving it as a surprise for the visitor. A more beautiful grove I have never seen, some two hundred years old, and the house as old as it—a long house built with picturesque chimney-stacks, well placed at each end, a resolute house, emphatic as an oath, with great steps before the door, and each made out of a single stone, a house at which one knocks timidly, lest mastiffs should rush out, eager for the strangling.

But no fierce voices answered my knocking, only a vague echo.

"Maybe I'll find somebody in the back premises," and wandering through a gateway, I found myself among many ruins of barns and byres, and the ruin of what had once been a haggard; and I asked myself what were those strange ruins, and not finding any explanation, passed on, thinking the great stones had probably been used for the crushing of apples. "Cider-presses?" and

I sought a living thing. No cow in the byre, nor pony in the stable, nor dog in the kennel, nor pig in the sty, nor gaunt Irish fowl stalking about the kitchen-door—the door which seemed to be the kitchen-door. An empty dovecot hung on the wall above it. "Mount Venus without doves," I said, and sought for a pair on the sagging roofs. To my knocking no answer came, and, disappointed, I wandered back to the front of the house. "At all events the view is open to me," and I descended the hillside towards the loveliest prospect that ever greeted mortal eyes.

At the end of the great yew hedge, hundreds of years old, the comely outline of Howth floated between sea and sky, spiritual, it seemed, on that grey day, as a poem by Shelley. One thought, too, of certain early pictures by Corot. The line of the shore was certainly drawn as beautifully as if he had drawn it, and the plain about the sea, filled with Dublin City, appeared in the distance a mere murky mass, with here and there a building, indicated, faintly, with Corot's beauty of touch. Nearer still the suburbs came trickling into the fields, the very fields through which I had passed, those in which I had seen herds of cattle feeding.

Then came a glimpse of a walled garden at the end of the yew hedge, a little lower down the shelving hillside, and, pulling a thorn-bush out of the gateway, I passed into a little wilderness of vagrant grasses and goats. A scheme for the restoration of Mount Venus started up in my mind; about two thousand pounds would have to be spent, but for that money I should live in the most beautiful place in the world. The Temple Church cannot compare with Chartres, nor Mount Venus with Windsor; a trifle, no doubt, in the world of art; but what a delicious trifle! . . . My dream died suddenly in the reflection that one country-house is generally enough for an Irish landlord, and I walked thinking if there

were one among my friends who would restore Mount Venus sufficiently for the summer months, long enough for me to write my book, and to acquire a permanent memory of a beautiful thing which the earth was claiming rapidly, and which, in a few years, would have passed away.

By standing on some loose stones it was possible to look into the first-floor rooms, and I could see marble chimney-pieces set in a long room, up and down which I could walk while arranging my ideas; and when ideas failed me I could wander to the window and suckle my imagination on the view. "This is the house I'm in search of, and there seems to be sufficient furniture for my wants. I'll return to-morrow. . . . But my pleasure will be lost if I've to wait till to-morrow. Somebody must be here. I'll try again." The silence that answered my knocking strengthened my determination to see Mount Venus that night, and I returned to the empty yard, and peeped and pried through all the outhouses, discovering at last a pail of newly-peeled potatoes. "There must be somebody about," and I waited, peeling the potatoes that remained unpeeled to pass the time.

"I'm afraid I'm wasting your potatoes," I said to the woman who appeared in the doorway—a peasant woman wearing a rough, dark grey petticoat and heavy boots, men's boots (they were almost the first thing I noticed) —just the woman who I expected would come, the caretaker. She looked surprised when I told her of my knocking, and said she could not understand how it was she had not heard me, for she had been there all the time. She spoke with her head turned aside, showing a thin well-cut face with a shapely forehead, iron-grey hair, a nose, long and thin, with fine nostrils, and a mouth a pretty line, I think. But that is all I can say about her, for when I try to remember more I seem to lose sight of her. . . .

"You've come to see the house?"

She stopped and looked at me.

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't see it?"

"No, there's no reason why you shouldn't. I thought nobody would ever come to see it again. That's all. If you'll wait a minute I'll fetch the key."

"She doesn't speak like a caretaker," I thought, now more than ever anxious to go over the house with her.

"Is it a lease of the house you'd like, or do you wish only to hire it for the season, sir?"

"Only for the season," I said. "It is to be let furnished?"

"There's not much furniture, but sufficient——"

"So long as there are beds, and a table to write upon, and a few chairs."

"Yes, there's that, and more than that," she answered, smiling. "This is the kitchen," and she showed me into a vast stone room; and the passages leading from the kitchen were wide and high, and built in stone. The walls seemed of great thickness, and when we came to the staircase, she said: "Mind you don't slip. The stairs are very slippery, but can easily be put right. The stone-mason will only have to run his chisel over them."

"I'm more interested in the rooms in which I'm to live myself, if I take the house."

"These are the drawing-rooms," she said, and drew my attention to the chimney-piece.

"It's very beautiful," I answered, turning from the parti-coloured marbles to the pictures. All the ordinary subjects of pictorial art lined the walls, but I passed on without noticing any, so poor and provincial was the painting, until I came suddenly upon the portrait of a young girl. The painting was not less anonymous, but her natural gracefulness showed in classical folds as she stood leaning on her bow, a Diana of the 'forties, looking

across the greensward waiting to hear if the arrow had reached its mark.

"Into what kind of old age has she drifted?" I asked myself, and the recollection of the thin clear-cut eager face brought me back again to the portrait, and forgetful of the woman I had found in the outhouse peeling potatoes for her dinner, I studied the face, certain that I had seen it before. But where?

"Several generations seem to be on these walls. Do you know anything about the people who lived in this house? It was built about two hundred years ago, I should say. Who built it? Do you know its history?"

The woman did not answer, and we wandered into another room, and, noticing her face was turned from me, I said:

"I should like to hear something about the girl whose portrait I've been looking at? There's nothing to conceal? No story——"

"There's nothing in her story that anyone need be ashamed of. But why do you ask?" And the manner in which she put the question still further excited my curiosity.

"Because it seems to me that I've seen the face before."

"Yes," she answered, "you have. The portrait in the next room is my portrait, as I was forty years ago. But I didn't think that anyone would see the likeness."

"Your portrait!" I answered abruptly. "Yes, I can see the likeness." And I heard her say under her breath that she had been through a great deal of trouble, and her face was again turned from me as we walked into another room.

"But do you wish to take the house, sir? If not——"

"In some ways it would suit me well enough, but it's a long way to bring up food here. I'll write and let you know. And your portrait I shall always remember," I added, thinking to please her. But seeing that my re-

mark failed to do so, I spoke of the dry well, and she told me there was another well: an excellent spring, only the cattle went there to drink; but it would be easy to put an iron fence round it.

"And now, if you'll excuse me. It's my dinner-time."

I let her go and wandered whither she had advised me—to the cromlech, one of the grandest in Ireland. It could not fail to interest me, she had said, and I could not fail to find it if I followed the path round the hill. I would come to some ilex-trees, and at the end of them, in the beech dell, I should find the altar.

And there I found a great rock laid upon three upright stones; one had fallen lately. In the words of a passing shepherd, the altar "was out of repair."

"Even Druid altars do not survive the nineteenth century in Ireland," I answered, and still lingering under the ilex-trees, for they were her trees, I thought of an artist coming to Mount Venus to paint her portrait in the 'forties. "A man of some talent, too," I said to myself, "for he painted her in a beautiful attitude. Or was it she who gave him the attitude, leaning on her bow? Was it she who settled the folds about her limbs, and decided the turn of her head, the eyes looking across the greensward towards the target? Had she fled with somebody whom she had loved dearly and been deserted and cast away on that hillside? Does the house belong to her? Or is she the caretaker? Does she live there with a servant? Or alone, cooking her own dinner?" None of my questions had she answered, and I invented story after story for her, all the way back to Dublin, through the grey evening in which no star appeared, only a red moon rising up through the woods like a fire in the branches.

My single meeting with this woman happened twenty-five years ago, and it is more than likely she is now dead, and the ruins among which she lived are probably a quarry whence the peasants go to fetch stones to build

their cottages; and the beech-trees have been cut down, and sold for eighteen-pence apiece by the herdsman. Mount Venus has passed away, never to be revived again. But enough of its story is remembered to fill a corner of the book I am dreaming; no more than that, for the book I am dreaming is a man's book, and it should be made of the life that lingered in Mayo till the end of the 'sixties: landlords, their retainers and serfs.

At these words, in the middle of the Temple, a scene rose up before me of a pack of harriers—or shall I say wild dogs?—running into a hare on a bleak hillside, and far away, showing faintly on a pale line of melancholy mountains, a horse rising up in the act of jumping. And on and on came horse and rider, over stone wall after stone wall, till stopped by a wall so high that no horse could jump it, so I thought. The gate of the park was miles away, so the hounds had time, not only to devour the hare they had killed, but to eat many a rabbit. Surrounding the furze, they drove the rabbits this way and that, the whole pack working in concert, as wild dogs might, and the whip, all the while, talking to a group of countrymen, until the hunt began to appear.

"I must be getting to my hounds now," and picking up the snaffle-rein, he drove the pony at the wall, who, to the admiration of the group, rose at it, kicking it with her hind hooves, landing in style among the hounds quarrelling over bits of skin and bone. The wild huntsman blew his horn, and gathering his hounds round him, said to me, before putting his pony again at the wall:

"A great little pony, isn't she? And what's half a dozen rabbits between twenty-two couple of hounds? It'll only give them an appetite, though they've always that. Bedad if they weren't the most intelligent hounds in the country it's dead long ago they'd be of hunger. Do you know of an old jackass?" he said, turning to a countryman. "If you do you might have a shilling for bringing

him. You can have the skin back if you like to come for it."

By this time all the field were up, the master, florid and elderly, and a quarrel began between him and the huntsman, whom he threatened to sack in the morning for not being up with the hounds.

"Wasn't there six foot of a wall between us? And they as hungry as hawks?"

"But if the pony was able to lep the wall, why didn't you ride her at it at once?"

"And so I did, your honour."

And the countrymen were called and they testified.

"Well, Pat, you must be up in time to get the next hare from them, for if you don't, it's myself and Johnny Malone that will be drinking our punch on empty bellies, which isn't good for any man."

And away went the master in search of his dinner over the grey plain, under rolling clouds threatening rain, the hounds trying the patches of furze for another hare, and the field—a dozen huntsmen with a lady amongst them—waiting, talking to each other about their horses. I could see Pat pressing his wonderful pony forward, on the alert for stragglers, assuring Bell-Ringer with a terrific crack of his whip that he was not likely to find a hare where he was looking for one, and must get into the furze instantly; and then I caught a glimpse of the ragged peasantry following the hunt over the plains of Ballyglass, just as they once followed it, a fierce wind thrilling in their shaggy chests, and they speaking Irish to each other, calling to the master in English.

"A place must be found," I said to myself, "in my story for that pack of hounds, for its master, for its whip, and for the marvellous pony, and for a race-meeting, whether at Ballinrobe or Breaghwy or Castlebar." Castlebar for preference. The horde of peasantry would look well amid the line of hills enclosing the plain: old men in

knee-breeches and tall hats, young men in trousers, cattle-dealers in great overcoats reaching to their heels, wearing broad-brimmed hats, everybody with a broad Irish grin on his face, and everybody with his blackthorn. Of a sudden I could see a crowd gathering to watch a bucking chestnut, a sixteen-hands horse with a small boy in pink upon his back. Now the horse hunches himself up till he seems like a hillock; his head is down between his legs, his hind legs are in the air, but he doesn't rid himself of his burden. He plunges forward, he rises—up, coming down again, his head between his legs; and the boy, still unstirred, recalls the ancient dream of the Centaur.

"Bedad! he's the greatest rider in Ireland," a crowd of tinkers and peasants are saying, the tinkers hurrying up to see the sport, retiring hurriedly as the horse plunges in their direction, running great danger of being kicked.

So did I remember the scene as I walked about the Temple that moonlit night, the very words of the tinkers chiming in my head after so many years: "Isn't he a devil?" cries one; "it's in the circus he ought to be." "Mickey was near off that time," cries another, and while the great fight waged between horse and jockey, my father rode up, crying to the crowd to disperse, threatening that if the course was not cleared in a few minutes he would ride in amongst them, and he on a great bay stallion.

"I'll ride in amongst you; you'll get kicked, you'll get kicked."

Even at this distance of time I can feel the very pang of fear which I endured, lest the horse my father was riding should kick some peasant and kill him, for, even in those feudal days, a peasant's life was considered of some value, and the horse my father rode quivered with excitement and impatience.

"Get back! Get back or there'll be no racing to-day. And you, Mickey Ford, if you can't get that horse to

the post, I'll start without you. Give him his head, put the spurs into him, thrash him!"

And taking my father at his word, Mickey raised his whip, and down it came sounding along the golden hide. The horse bounded higher, but without getting any nearer to unseating his rider, and away they went towards the starting-point, my father crying to the jockeys that they must get into line, telling Mickey that if he didn't walk his horse to the post he would disqualify him, and Mickey swearing that his horse was unmanageable, and my father swearing that the jockey was touching him on the off-side with his spur. It seemed to me my father was very cruel to the poor boy whose horse wouldn't keep quiet. A moment after they were galloping over the rough fields, bounding over the stone walls, the ragged peasantry rebuilding the walls for the next race, waving their sticks, running from one corner of the field to another, and no one thinking at all of the melancholy line of wandering hills enclosing the plain.

A scene to be included in the novel I was dreaming, and, for the moment, my father appeared to me as the principal character; but only for a moment. Something much rougher, more Irish, more uncouth, more Catholic, was required. My father was a Catholic, but only of one generation, and to produce the pure Catholic several are necessary, and for the hero of my novel I must seek among the Catholic end of my family.

What I wanted was a combination of sportsman and cattle-dealer, and I sought him among my mother's family, among my Galway cousins. Andy on his grey mare careering after the Blazers, rolling about like a sack in the saddle, but always leading the field, tempted me, until my thoughts were suddenly diverted by a remembrance of a Curragh meeting, with Dan who had brought up a crack from Galway and was going to break the ring.

" Dan, aren't you going to see your horse run? " I cried to him.

" He'll run the same whether I'm looking at him or not."

And Dan, in his long yellow mackintosh, hurrying through the bookies, rose up in my mind, as true and distinct and characteristic of Ireland as the poor woman I had discovered among the Dublin mountains. She had fixed herself on my mind as she was in a single moment. Dan I had seen many times, in all kinds of different circumstances; all the same, it is in his mackintosh at the Curragh meeting, on his way to the urinal, that I remember him—in his tall silk hat (everyone wore a tall silk hat at the Curragh in the 'seventies); but Dan was only half himself in a hat, for whosoever saw him remembers the long white skull over which he trailed a lock of black hair—the long skull which I have inherited from my mother's family—and the long pale face; and his hands were like mine, long, delicate, female hands; one of Dan's sisters had the most beautiful hands I ever saw. " He'll run the same whether I'm looking at him or not," and Dan laughed craftily, for craft and innocency were mingled strangely in his face. Dan had a sense of humour. Or did I mistake a certain naturalness for humour? Be that as it may, when I was in Galway I was often tempted to ride over to see him.

" It will be difficult to get him on to paper," I reflected. " His humour will not transpire if I'm not very careful, for, though I may transcribe the very words he uttered, they will mean little on paper unless I get his atmosphere: the empty house at Dunamon, the stables about it filled with race-horses, most of them broken down, for no four legs ever stood more than two years' training over the rough fields which Dan called his race-course. A four-year-old, with back sinews and suspensory ligaments sound, rarely stood in the Dunamon stables, a

birds, reddish dogs with long ears, for I used to detest them when I was a child—why I never knew, they seemed foolish; now they seemed merely quaint, and I wondered at my former aversion. Under one of them stood the piano—a grand, made in the beginning of the nineteenth century. " The Virgin's Prayer " lay still on top of a heap of music unlooked into by Dan, for when he touched a piano it was to play his memories of operas heard long ago in his youth. No doubt he often turned for refreshment to this piano after an excellent dinner cooked by Bridget, who, when she had done washing up, would appear in the drawing-room, for she was not confined to the bedroom and the kitchen. Dan was a human fellow, who would not keep his mistress unduly in the kitchen, and I can hear him strumming *Traviata* and *Trovatore* in my head, till overcome by love or weariness he could not do else than call her over, putting forward his knees for a seat.

Nobody ever witnessed this scene, but it must have happened just as I tell it.

A pretty girl Bridget certainly was, and one that any man would have liked to kiss, and one whom I should like to have kissed had I not been prevented by a prejudice. We are all victims of prejudice of one kind or another, and as the prejudice which prevented me from kissing Bridget inclines towards those which are regarded as virtues, I will tell the reader that the reason I refrained from kissing Dan's mistress was because it has always been the tradition in the West that my family never yielded to such indulgences as peasant mistresses or the vulgarity of hot punch; nobody but Archbishop McHale was allowed punch in my father's house; the common priests who dined there at election times had to lap claret. And, proud of my family's fortitudes, I refrained from Bridget.

"But if you respect your family so much, why do you lift the veil on Dan's frailties?"

Because if I did not do so, I should not think of Dan at all; and what we all dread most is to be forgotten. If I don't write about him I shall not be able to forget the large sums of money I lost by being put on the wrong horses. I am sure he would like to make amends to me for those losses; and the only way he can do this now is by giving me sittings. His brother and sisters will, no doubt, think my portrait in bad taste, the prejudices of our time being that a man's frailties should not be written about. But I find it hard to understand why a mistress should be looked upon as a frailty, and writing about the sin more grievous than the sin itself, matters which might be debated till morning without arriving at conclusions that would please everybody; and as it is very nearly morning now, it will be well to leave the weighing of moral principles to some later time, and to decide at once that Dan shall become a piece of literature in my hands. All the same, I cannot return to rest before asking why the feelings of my relations should be placed above Dan's? For, if Dan were in a position to express himself now, who would dare to say that he would like his love of Bridget to be forgotten? There is nothing more human, as Pater remarks, than the wish to be remembered for some years after death, and Dan was essentially a human being, and Bridget was a human being. So why should I defraud them of an immortality opened up to them by a chance word spoken by Edward Martyn in his garret in Pump Court? If my cousins complain, I'll answer them: "We see things from different sides: you from a Catholic, I from a literary." "What a side of life to choose!" I hear them saying, and myself answering: "Dan's love of Bridget was what was best in him, and what was most like him. It is in this preference that Dan is above you, for alone among you he

sought beauty. Bridget was a pretty girl, and beauty in a woman is all that a man like Dan could be expected to seek. Whoever amongst you has bought an Impressionist picture or a Pre-Raphaelite picture let him first cast a stone. But not one of you ever bought any object because you thought it beautiful, so leave me to tell Dan's story in my own way. His love of Bridget I hold in higher esteem than Mat's desire, during the last ten years of his life, to buy himself a seat in Heaven in the front row, a desire which, by the way, cost him many hundred a year."

At that moment a leaf floated down, and, forgetful of my tale, I looked up into the tree, admiring the smooth stem, the beautiful growth, the multitudinous leaves above me and the leaf in my hand. Enough light came through the branches for me to admire the pattern so wonderfully designed, and I said: "How intense life seems here in this minute! Yet in a few years my life in the Temple will have passed, will have become as dim as those years of Dan's life in Dunamon. But are these years dim or merely distant?"

A carp splashed in the fountain basin. "How foolish that fish would think me if he could think at all, wasting my time sitting here, thinking of Dan instead of going to bed." But being a human being, and not a carp, and Dan being a side of humanity which appealed to me, I continued to think of him and Bridget—dead days rising up in my mind one after the other.

I had gone to Galway to write *A Mummer's Wife*, and Dan had lent me a riding horse, a great black beast with no shoulders, but good enough to ride after a long morning's work, and a rumour having reached me that something had gone wrong with one of his cracks, I rode over to Dunamon. The horse was restive and seventeen hands high, so I did not venture to dismount but halloed outside, and receiving no answer rode round to the stables,

and inquired for the master of every stableman and jockey, without getting a satisfactory answer. Everyone seemed reticent. The master had gone to Dublin, said one; another, slinking away, mentioned he was thinking of going, perhaps he had gone, and seeing they did not wish to answer me, I called to one, slung myself out of the saddle and walked into the kitchen.

"Well, Bridget, how are you to-day?"

"Well, thank you, sir."

"What's this I'm hearing in the stables about the master going to Dublin?"

"Ah, you've been hearing that?" and a smile lit up Bridget's pretty eyes.

"Isn't it true?" Bridget hesitated, and I added: "Is it that he doesn't want to see me?"

"Indeed, sir, he's always glad to see you."

And my curiosity excited, I pressed her.

"It's just that he don't want to be showing himself to everybody."

To deceive her my face assumed a grave air.

"No trouble with the tenants, I hope? Nothing of that sort?"

"The people are quiet enough round here."

"Well, Bridget, I've always thought you a pretty girl. Tell me, what has happened?" And to lead her further I said: "But you and the master are just as good friends as ever, aren't you? Nothing to do with you, Bridget? I'd be sorry——"

"With me, sir? Sure, it isn't from me he'd be hiding in the garden."

"Unless, Bridget, he's beginning to grow holy, like Mr. Mat, who is a very holy man up in Dublin now, wearing a white beard, never going out except to chapel; far too repentant for the priest, who, it is said, would be glad to get rid of him."

"How is that, sir?"

"He cries out in the middle of Mass that God may spare his soul, interrupting everybody else's prayers. I never liked that sort of thing myself, Bridget, and have never understood how God could be pleased with a man for sending his children and their mother to America. You know of whom I'm talking?"

Bridget did not answer for a while, and when I repeated my question she said:

"Of course I do. Of Ellen Ford."

"Yes, that is of whom I'm thinking."

And then, looking round to see if anybody was within hearing, she told me how two of Mr. Mat's sons had come back from America, bothering Mr. Dan for their father's address.

"Two fine young fellows, the two of them as tall as Mr. Mat himself."

"And to escape from his nephews the master locks himself up in the garden? Well, a good place; excellent security in eighteen feet of a wall."

"But didn't they get into the trees—Mr. Mat's two big sons—and Mr. Dan never suspecting it walked underneath them, and then it was that they gave him the length and breadth of their tongues, and the whole stable listening." The smile died out of her eyes, and fearing that one day her lot might be Ellen Ford's, Bridget said: "Wouldn't it be more natural for Mr. Mat to have married Ellen and made a good wife of her than sending her to America and her sons coming back to bother Mr. Dan?"

"It was a cruel thing, Bridget."

"That's always the way," Bridget answered, and she moved a big saucepan from one side of the range to the other. "You'll find him in the garden if you knock three times."

"I'll go and fetch him presently."

"Will you be staying to dinner, sir?"

"That depends on what you're cooking."

"A pair of boiled ducks to-day."

"Boiled ducks!"

"Don't you like them boiled? You won't be saying anything against my cooking, if you stay to dinner, will you?"

"Not a word against your cooking. Excellent cooking, Bridget."

And she busied herself about the range, thinking of the ducks boiling in the saucepan, or thinking of what her fate would be if Dan died before making a good wife of her. She was no longer the pretty girl I had known years ago; she was not more than nine-and-twenty or thirty; but at thirty a peasant's figure begins to tell of the hard work she has done, and as she bent over the range I noticed that she wore a little more apron-string than she used to wear.

The return of Mat's two sons from America seemed to have made her a little anxious about her own future. "Any day," I said, "another girl may be brought up from the village, and then Bridget will be seen less frequently upstairs. She'll receive ten or twelve pounds a year for cleaning and cooking, and perhaps after a little while drift away like a piece of broken furniture into the outhouses. That will be her fate, unless she becomes my cousin," and the possibility of finding myself suddenly related to Bridget caused a little pensiveness to come into my walk. It was not necessary that Dan should marry her, but he should make her a handsome allowance if some years of damned hard luck on the turf should compel him to marry his neighbour's daughter; enlarged suspensory ligaments have made many marriages in Mayo and Galway; and I went about the Temple remembering that when —— was going to marry ——, the bride's relations had gathered round the fire to decide the fate of the peasant girl and her children. They were all at sixes and sevens until a

pious old lady muttered: "Let him emigrate them"; whereupon they rubbed their shins complacently. But Bridget was not put away; Dan died in her arms. After that her story becomes legendary. It has been said that she remained at Dunamon, and washed and cooked and scrubbed for the next of kin, and wore her life away there as a humble servant at the smallest wage that could be offered to her. And it has been said that she made terms with the next of kin and got a considerable sum from him, and went to America and keeps a boarding-house in Chicago. And I have heard, too, that she ended her days in the workhouse, a little crumpled ruin, amid other ruins, every one with her own story.

Bridget is a type in the West of Ireland, and I have known so many that perhaps I am confusing one story with another. For the purpose of my book any one of these endings would do. The best would, perhaps, be a warm cottage, a pleasant thatch, a garden, hollyhocks, and beehives. In such a cottage I can see Bridget an old woman. But the end of a life is not a thing that can be settled at once, walking about in moonlight, for what seems true then may seem fictitious next day. And already Dan and Bridget had begun to seem a little too trite and respectable for my purpose. When he came to be written out Dan would differ little from the characters to be found in Lever and Lover. They would have served him up with the usual sauce, a sort of restaurant gravy which makes everything taste alike, whereas painted by me, Dan would get into something like reality, he would attain a certain dignity; but a rougher being would suit my purpose better, and I fell to thinking of one of Dan's hirelings, Carmody, a poacher, the most notorious in Mayo and Galway, and so wary that he escaped convictions again and again; and when Dan appointed him as gamekeeper there was no further use

to think about bringing him for trial, for wasn't Dan on the Bench?

Carmody shot and fished over what land and what rivers he pleased. My friend's grouse, woodcock, snipe, wild duck, teal, widgeon, hares, and rabbits, went to Dunamon, and during the composition of *A Mummer's Wife,* when my palate longed for some change from beef and mutton, I had to invite Carmody to shoot with me or eat my dinner at Dunamon. He knew where ducks went by in the evening, and Carmody never fired without bringing down his bird—a real poaching shot and a genial companion, full of stories of the country. It is regrettable that I did not put them into my pocket-book at the time, for if I had I should be able now to write a book original in every line.

The old woodranger looked at me askance when I brought Carmody from Dunamon to shoot over my friend's lands. "The worst man that ever saw daylight," he would say. I pressed him to tell me of Carmody's misdeeds, and he told me many . . . but at this distance of time it is difficult to recall the tales I heard of Carmody's life among the mountains, trapping rabbits, and setting springs for woodcocks, going down to the village at night, battering in doors, saying he must have a sheaf of straw to lie on.

We used to row out to the islands and lie waiting for the ducks until they came in from the marshes; and those cold hours Carmody would while away with stories of the wrongs that had been done him, and the hardships he had endured before he found a protector in Dan. The account he gave of himself differed a good deal from the one which I heard from the woodranger, and looking into his pale eyes, I often wondered if it were true that he used to entice boys into the woods, and when he had led them far enough, turn upon them savagely, beating them, leaving them for dead. "Why

should he commit such devilry?" I often asked myself without discovering any reason, except that finding the world against him he thought he might as well have a blow at the world when he got the chance.

"Many a poor girl was sorry she ever met with him," the woodranger would say, and on my asking how was it that girls would follow such a wild man into the woods, he said: "Them tramps always have a following." We walked a little way in silence, and then he began suddenly to tell a story he had heard from a boy in the village. A knocking at the door had waked the boy, asleep in the loft, and he lay quaking, listening to his young sister talking to Carmody, who was telling her she must come with him.

"Norah was afraid, it being that late, but Carmody caught a hold of her and dragged her out through the door, so the boy told me, and he heard them going down the road, Carmody crying: 'Begob, I've seen that much of you that you'll be no use to anybody else.'"

"And what became of the girl? Did he marry her?"

"Sorra marry; he sold her to a tinker, it is said to the one who used to play the pipes."

"I thought you said he was a tinker."

"So he was; but he used to play the pipes in the dancing-houses on a Sunday night, till one night Father O'Farrell got out of his bed and walked across the bog and pushed open the door without a 'By your leave' or 'With your leave,' and making straight for the old tinker in the corner, snatched the pipes from him and threw them on the floor, and began dancing upon them himself, and them squeaking all the time, and he saying every time he jumped on them: 'Ah, the divil is in them still. Do you hear him roarin'?'"

I closed my eyes a little and licked my lips as I walked, thinking of the pleasure it would be to tell this story . . . and to tell it in its place. The priest

would have to be a friend of the family that lived in the Big House; he would perhaps come up to teach the children Latin, or they might go to him. Dan and his lass were typical of Catholic Ireland, tainted through and through with peasantry. True that every family begins with the peasant; it rises, when it rises, through its own genius. The cross is the worst stock of all, the pure decadent. "But he must come into the book. Never was there such a subject," I said, "as the one I am dreaming. Dan, Bridget, Carmody and his friends the tinkers—with these it should be possible to write something that would be read as long as——"

And while thinking of a simile wherewith to express the durability of the book, I remembered that Ireland had not been seen by me for many years, and to put the smack of immortality upon it, it would be necessary to live in Ireland, in a cabin in the West; only in that way could I learn the people, become intimate with them again. The present is an English-speaking generation, or very nearly, so Edward told me; mine was an Irish-speaking. The workmen that came up from the village to the Big House spoke it always, and the boatmen on the lake whispered it over their oars to my annoyance, until at last the temptation came along to learn it. The memory of that day floated up like a wraith from the lake: the two boatmen and myself, they anxious to teach me the language—a decisive day for Ireland, for if I had learned the language from the boatmen (it would have been easy to do so then) a book might have been written about Carmody and the tinker that would have set all Europe talking; a translation would have appeared before the year was out, and the Irish language would be a flourishing concern by now.

That day on Lough Carra the fate of the language was decided, unless, indeed, genius awakens in one of

the islanders off the coast where Edward tells me only Irish is spoken. If such a one were to write a book about his island he would rank above all living writers, and he would be known for evermore as the Irish Dante. But the possibility of genius, completely equipped, arising in the Arran Islands seemed a little remote. To quote that very trite, mutton-chop-whiskered gentleman, Matthew Arnold, not only the man is required, but the moment.

The novel dreamed that night in the Temple could not be written by an Arran islander, so it will never be written, for, alas! the impulse in me to redeem Ireland from obscurity was not strong enough to propel me from London to Holyhead, and then into a steamboat, and across Ireland to Galway, whence I should take a hooker whose destination was some fishing harbour in the Atlantic. No, it was not strong enough, and nothing is more depressing than the conviction that one is not a hero. And, feeling that I was not the predestined hero whom Cathleen ni Houlihan had been waiting for through the centuries, I fell to sighing, not for Cathleen ni Houlihan's sake, but my own, till my senses stiffening a little with sleep, thoughts began to repeat themselves.

Other men are sad because their wives and mistresses are ill, or because they die, or because there has been a fall in Consols, because their names have not appeared in the list of newly-created peers, baronets, and knights; but the man of letters . . . my energy for that evening was exhausted, and I was too weary to try to remember what Dujardin had said on the subject.

A chill came into the air, corresponding exactly with the chill that had fallen upon my spirit; the silence grew more intense and grey, and all the buildings stood stark and ominous.

"Out of such stuff as Ireland dreams are made. I haven't thought of Ireland for ten years, and to-night

in an hour's space I have dreamed Ireland from end to end. When shall I think of her again? In another ten years; that will be time enough to think of her again." And on these words I climbed the long stone stairs leading to my garret.

AVE

CHAP. I.

ONE of Ireland's many tricks is to fade away to a little speck down on the horizon of our lives, and then to return suddenly in tremendous bulk, frightening us. My words were: "In another ten years it will be time enough to think of Ireland again." But Ireland rarely stays away so long. As well as I can reckon, it was about five years after my meditation in the Temple that W. B. Yeats, the Irish poet, came to see me in my flat in Victoria Street, followed by Edward. My surprise was great at seeing them arrive together, not knowing that they even knew each other; and whilst staring at them I remembered they had met in my rooms in the King's Bench Walk. But how often had Edward met my friends and liked them, in a way, yet not enough to compel him to hook himself on to them by a letter or a visit? He is one of those self-sufficing men who drift easily into the solitude of a pipe or a book; yet he is cheerful, talkative, and forthcoming when one goes to see him. Our fellowship began in boyhood, and there is affection on his side as well as mine, I am sure of that; all the same he has contributed few visits to the maintenance of our friendship. It is I that go to him, and it was this knowledge of the indolence of his character that caused me to wonder at seeing him arrive with Yeats. Perhaps seeing them together stirred some fugitive jealousy in me, which passed away when the servant brought in the lamp, for, with the light behind them, my visitors appeared a twain as fantastic as anything ever seen in Japanese prints—Edward great in girth as an owl (he is nearly as neckless), blink-

ing behind his glasses, and Yeats lank as a rook, a-dream in black silhouette on the flowered wall-paper.

But rooks and owls do not roost together, nor have they a habit or an instinct in common. "A mere doorstep casualty," I said, and began to prepare a conversation suitable to both, which was, however, checked by the fateful appearance they presented, sitting side by side, anxious to speak, yet afraid. They had clearly come to me on some great business! But about what, about what? I waited for the servant to leave the room, and as soon as the door was closed they broke forth, telling together that they had decided to found a Literary Theatre in Dublin; so I sat like one confounded, saying to myself: "Of course they know nothing of Independent Theatres," and, in view of my own difficulties in gathering enough audience for two or three performances, pity began to stir in me for their forlorn project. A forlorn thing it was surely to bring literary plays to Dublin! Dublin of all cities in the world!

"It is Yeats," I said, "who has persuaded dear Edward," and looking from one to the other, I thought how the cunning rook had enticed the profound owl from his belfry—an owl that has stayed out too late, and is nervous lest he should not be able to find his way back; perplexed, too, by other considerations, lest the Dean and Chapter, having heard of the strange company he is keeping, may have, during his absence, bricked up the entrance to his roost.

As I was thinking these things, Yeats tilted his chair in such dangerous fashion that I had to ask him to desist, and I was sorry to have to do that, so much like a rook did he seem when the chair was on its hind legs. But if ever there was a moment for seriousness, this was one, so I treated them to a full account of the Independent Theatre, begging them not to waste their plays upon Dublin.

" It would give me no pleasure whatever to produce my plays in London," Edward said. " I have done with London."

" Martyn would prefer the applause of our own people," murmured Yeats, and he began to speak of the by-streets, and the lanes, and the alleys, and how one feels at home when one is among one's own people.

" Ninety-nine is the beginning of the Celtic Renaissance," said Edward.

" I am glad to hear it; the Celt wants a renaissance, and badly; he has been going down in the world for the last two thousand years."

" We are thinking," said Yeats, " of putting a dialogue in Irish before our play . . . ' Usheen and Patrick.' "

" Irish spoken on the stage in Dublin! You are not——"

Interrupting me, Edward began to blurt out that a change had come, that Dublin was no longer a city of barristers, judges, and officials pursuing a round of mean interests and trivial amusements, but the capital of the Celtic Renaissance.

" With all the arts for crown—a new Florence," I said, looking at Edward incredulously, scornfully perhaps, for to give a Literary Theatre to Dublin seemed to me like giving a mule a holiday, and when he pressed me to say if I were with them, I answered with reluctance that I was not; whereupon, and without further entreaty, the twain took up their hats and staves, and they were by the open door before I could beg them not to march away like that, but to give me time to digest what they had been saying to me, and for a moment I walked to and forth, troubled by the temptation, for I am naturally propense to thrust my finger into every literary pie-dish. Something was going on in Ireland for sure, and remembering the literary tone that had crept into a certain Dublin newspaper—somebody sent me the *Express* on Saturdays—I said, " I'm with you, but only platonically.

You must promise not to ask me to rehearse your plays." I spoke again about the Independent Theatre, and of the misery I had escaped from when I cut the painter.

"But you'll come to Ireland to see our plays," said Edward.

"Come to Ireland!" and I looked at Edward suspiciously; a still more suspicious glance fell upon Yeats. "Come to Ireland! Ireland and I have ever been strangers, without an idea in common. An Irishman should not return to Ireland; and we know it."

"One of the oldest of our stories," Yeats began. Whenever he spoke these words a thrill came over me; I knew they would lead me through accounts of strange rites and prophecies, and at that time I believed that Yeats, by some power of divination, or of ancestral memory, understood the hidden meaning of the legends, and whenever he began to tell them I became impatient of interruption. But it was now myself that interrupted, for, however great the legend he was about to tell, and however subtle his interpretation, it would be impossible for me to give him my attention until I had been told how he had met Edward, and all the circumstances of the meeting, and how they had arrived at an agreement to found an Irish Literary Theatre. The story was disappointingly short and simple. When Yeats had said that he had spent the summer at Coole with Lady Gregory I saw it all; Coole is but three miles from Tillyra: Edward is often at Coole; Lady Gregory and Yeats are often at Tillyra; Yeats and Edward had written plays—the drama brings strange fowls to roost.

"So an owl and a rook have agreed to build in Dublin. A strange nest indeed they will put together, one bringing sticks, and the other—with what materials does the owl build?" My thoughts hurried on, impatient to speculate on what would happen when the shells began to chip. Would the young owls cast out the young rooks,

or would the young rooks cast out the young owls, and what view would the beholders take of this wondrous hatching? And what view would the Church?

"So it was in Galway the nest was builded, and Lady Gregory elected to the secretaryship," I said. The introduction of Lady Gregory's name gave me pause. "And you have come over to find actors, and rehearse your plays. Wonderful, Edward, wonderful! I admire you both, and am with you, but on my conditions. You will remember them? And now tell me, do you think you'll find an audience in Dublin capable of appreciating *The Heather Field?*"

"Ideas are only appreciated in Ireland," Edward answered, somewhat defiantly.

I begged them to stay to dinner, for I wanted to hear about Ireland, but they went away, speaking of an appointment with Miss Vernon—that name or some other name—a lady who was helping them to collect a cast.

As soon as they had news they would come to me again. And on this I returned to my room deliciously excited, thrilling all over at the thought of an Irish Literary Theatre, and my own participation in the Celtic Renaissance brought about by Yeats. "So the drama," I muttered, "was not dead but sleeping," and while the hour before dinner was going by, I recalled an evening I had spent about two years ago in the Avenue Theatre. It was there I had seen Yeats for the first time, and it amused me to remember with what eyes I had seen him first, just after the performance of his little one-act play, *The Land of Heart's Desire.* His play neither pleased nor displeased; it struck me as an inoffensive trifle, but himself had provoked in me a violent antipathy, because I judged him from his appearance, and thereby lost two years of his wonderful company. It is true that when I saw him he was on exhibition, striding to and forth at the back of the dress circle, a long black cloak

drooping from his shoulders, a soft black sombrero on his head, a voluminous black silk tie flowing from his collar, loose black trousers dragging untidily over his long, heavy feet—a man of such excessive appearance that I could not do otherwise—could I?—than to mistake him for an Irish parody of the poetry that I had seen all my life strutting its rhythmic way in the alleys of the Luxembourg Gardens, preening its rhymes by the fountains, excessive in habit and gait.

As far back as the days when I was a Frenchman, I had begun to notice that whosoever adorns himself will soon begin to adorn his verses, so robbing them of that intimate sense of life which we admire in Verlaine; his verses proclaim him to have been a man of modest appearance. Nor did Hugo or Banville affect any eccentricity of dress—and there are others. But let us be content with the theory, and refrain from collecting facts to support it, for in doing so we shall come upon exceptions, and these will have to be explained away. Suffice it to say, therefore, that Yeats' appearance at the Avenue Theatre confirmed me in the belief that his art could not be anything more than a merely pretty externality, if it were as much, and I declined to allow Nettleship to introduce me to him. "No, my good friend, I don't want to know him; he wouldn't interest me, not any more than the Book of Kells—not so much; Kells has at all events the merit of being archaic, whereas—— No, no; to speak to him 'would make me 'eave'—if I may quote a girl whom I heard speaking in the street yesterday."

It was months after, when I had forgotten all about Yeats, that my fingers distractedly picked up a small volume of verse out of the litter in Nettleship's room. "Yeats!" And after turning over a few pages, I called to Nettleship, who, taking advantage of my liking for the verses, begged again that he might be allowed to arrange a meeting, and, seduced by the strain of genuine music

that seemed to whisper through the volume, I consented.

The " Cheshire Cheese " was chosen as a tryst, and we started for that tavern one summer afternoon, talking of poetry and painting by turns, stopping at the corner of the street to finish an argument or an anecdote. Oxford Street was all aglow in the sunset, and Nettleship told, as we edged our way through the crowds, how Yeats' great poem was woven out of the legends of the Fianna, and stopped to recite verses from it so often that when we arrived the poet was seated in front of a large steak, eating abstractedly, I thought, as if he did not know what he was eating—which was indeed the case—for he did not pretend any interest in the remonstrance that I addressed to Nettleship for having failed to choose Friday to dine at the " Cheshire Cheese," it being the day when steak-and-kidney pudding was " on " at that tavern.

In order to help us through the first awkward five minutes, Nettleship informed me that Yeats was writing a work on Blake, and the moment Blake's name was mentioned Yeats seemed altogether to forget the food before him, and very soon we were deep in a discussion regarding the Book of Tiel, which Nettleship said was Blake's most effectual essay in metre. The designs that accompanied Blake's texts were known to me, and when the waiter brought us our steaks, Blake was lost sight of in the interest of the food, and in our interest in Yeats' interpretation of Blake's teaching.

But as the dinner at the " Cheshire Cheese " was given so that I should make Yeats' acquaintance, Nettleship withdrew from the conversation, leaving me to continue it, expecting, no doubt, that the combat of our wits would provide him with an entertainment as exciting as that of the cock-fights familiar a century ago in the adjoining yard. So there was no choice for me but to engage in disputation or to sulk, and the reader will agree with me that I did well to choose the former course, though the

ground was all to my disadvantage, my knowledge of Blake being but accidental. There was, however, no dread of combat in me, my adversary not inspiring much belief that he would prove a stout one, and feeling sure that without difficulty I could lay him dead before Nettleship, I rushed at him, all my feathers erect. Yeats parried a blow on which I counted, and he did this so quickly and with so much ease that he threw me on the defensive in a moment. "A dialectician," I muttered, "of the very first rank; one of a different kind from any I have met before"; and a few moments after I began to notice that Yeats was sparring beautifully, avoiding my rushes with great ease, evidently playing to tire me, with the intention of killing me presently with a single spur stroke. In the bout that ensued I was nearly worsted, but at the last moment an answer shot into my mind. Yeats would have discovered its weakness in a moment, and I might have fared ill, so it was a relief to me to notice that he seemed willing to drop our argument about Blake and to talk about something else. He was willing to do this, perhaps, because he did not care to humiliate me, or it may have been that he wearied of talking about a literature to one who was imperfectly acquainted with it, or it may have been that I made a better show in argument than I thought for.

We might indulge in endless conjectures, and the simplest course will be to assume that the word "dramatic" led the conversation away from Blake. Yeats was interested in the theatre, and anxious for me to tell him what his chances were of obtaining a hearing for a literary play in London. *The Land of Heart's Desire* was not the only play he had written; there was another—a four-act play in verse, which my politeness said would give me much pleasure to read. I had met with many beautiful verses in the little volume picked up in Nettleship's rooms. Yeats bowed his acknowledgment of my

compliments, and the smile of faint gratification that trickled round his shaven lips seemed to me a little too dignified; nor did I fail to notice that he refrained from any mention of my own writings, and wondering how *Esther Waters* would strike him, I continued the conversation, finding him at every turn a more interesting fellow than any I had met for a long time. Very soon, however, it transpired that he was allowing me to talk of the subjects that interested me, without relinquishing for a moment his intention of returning to the subject that interested him, which was to discover through me what his chances were of getting a verse play produced in London. Two or three times I ignored his attempts to change the conversation, but at last yielded to his quiet persistency, and treated him to an account of the Independent Theatre and of its first performances organized by me, and, warming to my subject, I told him of the play that I had agreed to write if Mr. G. R. Sims would give a hundred pounds for a stall from which he might watch the performance. The stipulated price brought the desired perplexity into Yeats' face, and it was amusing to add to his astonishment with—"And I got the hundred pounds." As he was obviously waiting to hear the story of the hundred-pounds stall, I told him that Sims was a popular dramatist, to whom a reporter had gone with a view to gathering his opinions regarding independent drama, and that in the course of Sims' remarks about Ibsen, allusion had been made to the ideas expressed by me regarding literature in drama; and, as if to give point to his belief in the limitations of dramatic art, he had said that he would give a hundred pounds if Mr. George Moore would write an unconventional play for the Independent Theatre.

The reporter came to me with his newspaper, and after reading his interview with Mr. Sims, he asked me for my answer to Mr. Sims' challenge.

"I am afraid Mr. Sims is 'spoofing' you." (In the 'nineties the word "spoofing" replaced the old word "humbug," and of late years it seems to be heard less frequently; but as it evokes a time gone by, I may be excused for reviving it here.)

"If you write a play," the reporter answered, "Mr. Sims will not refuse to give the hundred pounds."

"But he asks for an unconventional play, and who is to decide what is conventional? I notice," I said, picking up the paper, "that he says the scenes which stirred the audience in *Hedda Gabler* are precisely those that are to be found in every melodrama. Mr. Sims has succeeded in 'spoofing' you, but he will not get me to write a play for him to repudiate as conventional. 'No, no,' I can hear him saying, 'the play is as conventional as the last one I wrote for the Adelphi. I'll not pay for that.' But if Mr. Sims wishes to help the independent drama, let him withdraw the word 'conventional' or let him admit that he has been humbugging."

The reporter left me, and the next week's issue of the paper announced that Mr. Sims had withdrawn the objectionable word, and that I had laid aside my novel and was writing the play.

So did I recount the literary history of *The Strike at Arlingford* to Yeats, who waited, expecting that I would give him some account of the performance of the play, but remembering him as he had appeared when on exhibition at the Avenue Theatre, it seemed to me that the moment had come for me to develop my æstheticism that an author should never show himself in a theatre while his own play was being performed. Yeats was of the opinion that it was only by watching the effect of the play upon the public that an author could learn his trade. He consented, however, and very graciously, to read *The Strike at Arlingford,* if I would send it to him, and went away, leaving me under the impression that he looked upon him-

self as the considerable author, and that to meet me at dinner at the " Cheshire Cheese " was a condescension on his part. He had somehow managed to dissipate, and, at the same time, to revive, my first opinion of him, but I am quick to overlook faults in whoever amuses and interests me, and this young man interested me more than Edward or Symons, my boon companions at that time. He was an instinctive mummer, a real dancing dog, and the dog on his hind legs is, after all, humanity; we are all on our hind legs striving to astonish somebody, and that is why I honour respectability; if there were nobody to shock, our trade would come to an end, and for this reason I am secretly in favour of all the cardinal virtues. But this young man was advertising himself by his apparel, as the Irish middle-classes do when they come to London bent on literature. They come in knee-breeches, in Jaeger, in velvet jackets, and this one was clothed like a Bible reader and chanted like one in his talk. All the same, I could see that among much Irish humbug there was in him a genuine love of his art, and he was more intelligent than his verses had led me to expect. All this I admitted to Nettleship as we walked up Fleet Street together. It even seemed difficult to deny to Nettleship, when he bade me good-bye at Charing Cross, that I should like to see the young man again, and all the way back to the Temple I asked myself if I should redeem my promise and send him *The Strike at Arlingford.* And I might have sent it if I had happened to find a copy in my bookcase, but I never keep copies of my own books. The trouble of writing to my publisher for the play was a serious one; the postman would bring it to me in a brown-paper parcel which I should have to open in order to write Yeats' name on the fly-leaf. I should have to tie the parcel up again, redirect it, and carry it to the post—and all this trouble for the sake of an opinion which would not be the slightest use to me when I had gotten it.

It was enough to know that there was such a play on my publisher's shelves, and that a dramatic writer had paid a hundred pounds to see it. "Why turn into the Vale of Yarrow?" I muttered, and, rising from my table, I went to the window to watch the pigeons that were coming down from the roofs to gobble the corn a cabman was scattering for them.

Yeats was forgotten, and almost as completely as before, a stray memory of his subtle intelligence perhaps crossing my mind from time to time and a vague regret coming into it that he had dropped out of my life. But no effort was made to find him, and I did not see him again until we met at Symons' rooms—unexpectedly, for it was for a talk with Symons before bedtime that I had walked over from King's Bench Walk. But it was Yeats who opened the door; Symons was out, and would be back presently—he generally returned home about one. Wouldn't I come in? We fell to talking about Symons, who spent his evenings at the Alhambra and the Empire, watching the ballet. Having written *Symbolism in Literature,* he was now investigating the problem of symbolism in gesture. Or was it symbolism in rhythm or rhythmic symbolism? Even among men of letters conversation would be difficult were it not for the weakness of our absent friends, and to pass the time I told Yeats of an evening I had spent with Symons at the Empire two weeks ago, and how I had gone with him after to the "Rose and Crown"; but I soon began to see that Yeats was not very much interested. He hung dreamily over the fire, and fearing that he should think I had spoken unkindly of Symons—a thing I had no intention of doing (Symons being at the time one of my greatest friends)—I spoke of the pleasure I took in his society, and then of my admiration of his prose, so distinguished, so fine, and so subtle. The Temple clock clanging out the hour interrupted my eulogy. "As Symons does not seem to return," I said, "I must go home

to bed." Yeats begged me to stay a little longer, and tempted by the manuscripts scattered about the floor, I sat down and asked him to tell me what he had been writing. He needed no pressing to talk of his work—a trait that I like in an author, for if I do not want to hear about a man's work I do not want to hear about himself.

He told me that he was revising the stories that he had contributed to different magazines, and was writing some new ones, and together these were to form a book called *The Secret Rose.*

"I am afraid I interrupted you."

"No, I had struck work some time. I came upon a knot in one of the stories, one which I could not disentangle, at least not to-night."

I begged him to allow me to try to disentangle it, and when I succeeded, and to his satisfaction, I expected his face to light up; but it remained impassive, hierarchic as ancient Egypt. "Wherein now lies his difficulty?" I asked myself. "Being a poet, he must be able to find words," and we began to talk of the search for the right word.

"Not so much the right word," Yeats interrupted, "but the right language, if I were only sure of what language to put upon them."

"But you don't want to write your stories in Irish, like Edward?"

A smile trickled into his dark countenance, and I heard him say that he had no Irish. It was not for a different language that he yearned, but for a style. Morris had made one to suit his stories, and I learnt that one might be sought for and found among the Sligo peasants, only it would take years to discover it, and then he would be too old to use it.

"You don't mean the brogue, the ugliest dialect in the world?"

"No dialect is ugly," he said; "the bypaths are all

beautiful. It is the broad road of the journalist that is ugly."

Such picturesqueness of speech enchants me, and the sensation was of a window being thrown suddenly open, and myself looking down some broad chase along which we would go together talking literature, I saying that very soon there would not be enough grammar left in England for literature. English was becoming a lean language. "We have lost, Yeats, and I fear for ever, the second person singular of the verbs; 'thee' and 'thou' are only used by peasants, and the peasants use them incorrectly. In poetry, of course——" Yeats shook his head —"thee" and "thou" were as impossible in verse as in prose, and the habit of English writers to allow their characters to "thee" and to "thou" each other had made the modern poetic drama ridiculous. Nor could he sympathize with me when I spoke of the lost subjunctive, and I understood him to be of the opinion that a language might lose all its grammar and still remain a vehicle for literature, the literary artist always finding material for his art in the country.

"Like a landscape painter," I answered him. "But we are losing our verbs; we no longer ascend and descend, we go up and we go down; birds still continue to alight, whereas human beings get out and get in."

Yeats answered that even in Shakespeare's time people were beginning to talk of the decline of language. "No language," he said, "was ever so grammatical as Latin, yet the language died; perhaps from excess of grammar. It is with idiom and not with grammar that the literary artist should concern himself"; and, stroking his thin yellow hands slowly, he looked into the midnight fire, regretting he had no gift to learn living speech from those who knew it—the peasants. It was only from them one could learn to write, their speech being living speech, flowing out of the habits of their lives, "struck out of

life itself," he said, and I listened to him telling of a volume of folklore collected by him in Sligo; a welcome change truly is such after reading the *Times*, and he continued to drone out his little tales in his own incomparable fashion, muttering after each one of them, like an oracle that has spent itself—" a beautiful story, a beautiful story!" When he had muttered these words his mind seemed to fade away, and I could not but think that he was tired and would be happier tucked up in bed. But when I rose out of my chair he begged me to remain; I would if he would tell me another story. He began one, but Symons came in in the middle of it, tired after long symbolistic studies at the Empire, and so hungry that he began to eat bread and butter, sitting opposite to us and listening to what we were saying, without, however, giving us much of his attention. He seemed to like listening to Yeats talking about style, but I gathered from his detachment that he felt his own style had been formed years ago; a thing of beauty without doubt, but accidentally bestowed upon him, so much was it at variance with his appearance and his conversation; whereas Yeats and his style were the same thing; and his strange old-world appearance and his chanting voice enabled me to identify him with the stories he told me, and so completely that I could not do otherwise than believe that Angus, Étaine, Diarmuid, Deirdre, and the rest, were speaking through him. " He is a lyre in their hands; they whisper through him as the wind through the original forest; but we are plantations, and came from England in the seventeenth century. There is more race in him than in anyone I have seen for a long while," I muttered, while wending my way down the long stairs, across Fountain Court, through Pump Court, by the Temple Church, under the archway into King's Bench Walk.

It is pleasant to stay with a friend till the dusk, especially in summer; the blue dusk that begins between

one and two is always wonderful; and that morning, after listening to many legends, it struck me, as I stood under the trees in King's Bench Walk, watching the receding stars, that I had discovered at last the boon companion I had been seeking ever since I came to live in London.

A boon companion is as necessary to me as a valet is to Sir William Eden. Books do not help me to while away the time left over when I am not writing, and I am fain to take this opportunity to advise everybody to attend to his taste for reading; once it is lost it is hard to recover; and believe, if in nothing else, in this, that reading is becoming an increasing necessity. The plays that entertain us are few, the operas hardly more numerous; there are not always concerts, and one cannot choose the music that shall be played if one be not a King. To have music in the evenings at home one must choose for a wife one who can play Chopin, and modern education does not seem to have increased the number of these women. One meets one, misses her, and for ever after is forced to seek literary conversation; and literary conversation is difficult to get in London. One cannot talk literature in a club, or at a literary dinner; only with a boon companion; and my search is even a more difficult one than that of the light-o'-loves who once told me that her great trouble in life was to find an *amant de cœur*. The confession amused me, the lady being exceedingly beautiful, but I understood her as soon as she explained all the necessary qualifications for the post. "He must be in love with me," she said. "As you are very polite, you will admit that there can be no difficulty about that. And I must be in love with him! Now you are beginning to understand. He must be able to give me his whole time, he must be sufficiently well off to take me out to dinner, to the theatre, to send me flowers. . . . Money, of course, I would not take from him."

"Your trouble as you explain it is a revelation of life,"

I answered, " but it is not greater than mine "—she tossed her head—" for what I am seeking in London at the present time is a boon companion. In many respects he must resemble your *amant de cœur*. He must like my company, and as you are very polite, you will admit there can be no difficulty about that. I shall have to enjoy his company; and so many other things are necessary that I am beginning to lose heart."

Mary pressed me to recapitulate my paragon, and to console her, for there is nothing so consoling as to find that one's neighbour's troubles are at least as great as one's own, I told her that my boon companion must be between thirty and fifty. " Until a man reaches the age of thirty he is but a boy, without experience of life; I'd prefer him between thirty-five and forty; and my boon companion must be a bachelor or separated from his wife. How he spends his days concerns me not, only in the evenings do I want his company—at dinner about twice a week, for it is my pleasure to prolong the evenings into the small hours of the morning, talking literature and the other arts until the mouth refuses another cigar and the eyelids are heavy with sleep. You see, he must be a smoker, preferably a cigar rather than a cigarette smoker, but I lay no stress upon that particular point. I should prefer his appearance and manner to be that of a gentleman, but this is another point upon which I lay no particular stress. His first qualification is intelligence, and amongst women you will understand me better than any other, your lovers having always been men of intellect. Any one of them would suit me very well: you have loved, I think, Adrien Marcs, Coppée, and Becque."

" You ask for a great deal," she answered.

" Not so much as you," I said. " You, Mary, have required great works from your lovers, and have gotten them. But I do not require that my boon companion shall write nearly as well as any of the men you have

honoured. My companion's literature concerns me much less than his conversation, and if it were not that only a man of letters can understand literature, I would say that I should not care if he had never put a pen to paper. I am interested much more in his critical than in his creative faculty; he must for my purpose be a man keenly critical, and he must be a witty man too, for to be able to distinguish between a badly and a well written book is not enough—a professor of literature can do that . . . occasionally. My man must be able to entertain me with unexpected sallies. I would not hear him speak of the 'verbal felicities' of Keats, or of the 'truly noble diction' of Milton, and I would ring and tell my servant to call a cab were I to catch him mumbling 'and with new-spangled ore, flames in the forehead of the morning sky.' If the subject were poetry, my boon companion would be expected by me to flash out unexpected images, saying that Keats reminded him of a great tabby-cat purring in the sun; and I would like to hear him mutter that there was too much rectory lawn in Tennyson; not that I would for a moment hold up the lawn and the cat as felicities of criticism. He would, I hope, be able to flash out something better. It is hard to find a simile when one is seeking for one. He would have to be interested in the other arts, and be able to talk about them intelligently, literature not being sufficient to while an evening away. And in every art he must be able to distinguish between wash-tubs and vases; he must know instinctively that Manet is all vase, and that Mr. ——'s portraits are all wash-tub. When the conversation wanders from painting to sculpture, he must not be very concerned to talk about Rodin, and if he should speak of this sculptor, his praise should be measured: 'There is not the character of any country upon Rodin's sculpture; it is not French nor Italian; it would be impossible to say whence it came if one did not know. As a decorative

artist he is without remarkable talent, and he too often parodies Michael Angelo.' *Michel Ange à la coule* would be a phrase that would not displease me to hear, especially if it were followed by—'Only the marvellous portraitist commands our admiration: the bronzes, not the marbles—they are but copies by Italian workmen, untouched by the master who alone, among masters, has never been able to put his hand to the chisel.' A knowledge of music is commendable in a boon companion, else he must be unmusical like Yeats. It would be intolerable to hear him speak of *Tristan* and ask immediately after if *Madame Butterfly* were not a fine work, too."

With her enchanting smile, Mary admitted that my difficulties were not less than hers, and so I kissed her and returned, with some regret, next day to London and to dear Edward, who has served me as a boon companion ever since he came to live in the Temple. He likes late hours; he is a bachelor, a man of leisure, and has discovered at last what to admire and what to repudiate. But he is not very sure-footed on new ground, and being a heavy man, his stumblings are loud. Moreover, he is obsessed by a certain part of his person which he speaks of as his soul: it demands Mass in the morning, Vespers in the afternoon, and compels him to believe in the efficacy of Sacraments and the Pope's indulgences; and it forbids him to sit at dinner with me if I do not agree to abstain from flesh meat on Fridays, and from remarks regarding my feelings towards the ladies we meet in the railway-trains and hotels when we go abroad.

When Symons came to live in the Temple I looked forward to finding a boon companion in him. He is intelligent and well versed in literature, French and English; a man of somewhat yellowish temperament, whom a wicked fairy had cast for a parson; but there was a good fairy on the sill at the time, and when the wicked fairy had disappeared up the chimney she came in through the

window, and bending over the cradle said: "I bestow upon thee extraordinary literary gifts." Her words floated up the chimney and brought the wicked fairy down again as soon as the good fairy had departed. For some time she was puzzled to know what new mischief she should be up to; she could not rob the child of the good fairy's gift of expression in writing: "but in thy talk," she said, "thou shalt be as commonplace as Goldsmith," and flew away in a great passion.

Unlike Symons, Yeats is thinner in his writings than in his talk; very little of himself goes into his literature—very little can get into it, owing to the restrictions of his style; and these seemed to me to have crept closer in *Rosa Alchemica,* inspiring me to prophesy one day to Symons that Yeats would end by losing himself in Mallarmé, whom he had never read.

Symons did not agree with me in my estimation of Yeats' talent, and I did not press the point, being only really concerned with Yeats in as far as he provided me with literary conversation. A more serious drawback was Yeats' lack of interest in the other arts. He admired and hung Blake's engravings about his room, but it was their literary bent rather than the rhythm of the spacing and the noble line that attracted him, I think. But I suppose one must not seek perfection outside of Paris, and in the Temple I was very glad of his company. He is absorbed by literature even more than Dujardin, that prince of boon companions, for literature has allowed Dujardin many love-stories, and every one has been paid for with a book (his literature is mainly unwritten); all the same, his women, though they have kept him from writing, have never been able to keep him from his friends; for our sakes he has had the courage only to be beguiled by such women as those whom he may treat like little slaves; and when one of these accompanies him to his beautiful summer residence at Fontainebleau, in those

immemorial evenings, sad with the songs of many nightingales, she is never allowed to speak except when she is spoken to; and when she goes with him to Bayreuth, she has to walk with companions of her own sex, whilst the boon companion explains the mystery of *The Ring,* musical and literary. If I were to go to his lodgings on the eve of the performance of *The Valkyrie* and awaken Dujardin, he would push his wife aside as soon as he heard the object of my visit was to inquire from him why Wotan is angry with Brünnehilde because she gives her shield and buckler to Siegmund, wherewith Siegmund may fight Hunding on the mountain-side, and would rise up in bed and say to me: "You do not know, then, that the Valkyrie are the wills of Wotan which fly forth to do his bidding?" And if I said that I was not quite sure that I understood him, he would shake himself free from sleep and begin a metaphysical explanation for which he would find justification in the character of the motifs. And then, if one were to say to Dujardin: "Dujardin, in a certain scene in the second act of *Siegfried,* Wagner introduces the 'Question to Fate' motif without any apparent warrant from the text to do so; I fear he used the motif because his score required the 'three grave notes,'" Dujardin would, for sure, begin to argue that though the libretto contained no explicit allusion to Fate in the text, yet Fate was implicit in it from the beginning of the scene, and, getting out of bed, he would take the volume from the little shelf at his head and read the entire scene before consenting to go to sleep.

And if one were to go to Yeats' bedside at three o'clock in the morning and beg him to explain a certain difficult passage, let us say, in the *Jerusalem,* he would raise himself up in bed like Dujardin, and, stroking his pale Buddhistic hands, begin to spin glittering threads of argument and explanation; instead of Schopenhauer and

Nietzsche, we should hear of the Rosicrucians and Jacob Boehm.

My boon companions are really strangely alike, though presenting diverse appearances. Were I to devote a volume to each, the casual reader would probably mutter as he closed the last, "A strangely assorted set," but the more intelligent reader would be entertained by frequent analogies; many to his practised eye would keep cropping up: he would discover that Dujardin, though he has written a book in which he worships the massive materialism of ancient Rome, and derides the soft effusive Jewish schism known as Christianity, would, nevertheless, like to preserve a few Catholic monasteries for the use of his last days. At least a dozen would be necessary, for Dujardin admits that he would be not unlikely flung out of several before he reached the one in which he was fated to die in long white robe and sandal shoon, an impenitent exegetist, but an ardent Catholic, and, perhaps to the last, a doubtful Christian. How often have I heard him mutter in his beard as he crosses the room: "It would be a beautiful end . . . in smock and sandal shoon." He is attracted by rite, and Yeats is too; but whereas Dujardin would like the magician to boil the pot for him, Yeats would cry:

> "Double, double, toil and trouble,
> Fire burn, and cauldron bubble,"

following all the best recipes of the Kabala. I have often thought that he takes a secret pleasure in the word, speaking it with that unction which comes into the voices of certain relations of mine when they mention the Bible. And from his constant reference to the Kabala, I judged it to be his familiar reading, though I never saw it in his hand nor upon his table when I went to see him. So one day when he left the room I searched for it among his books, but only copies of Morris and Blake's works came

under my hand; and on mentioning the Kabala to him when he returned, he began to speak volubly of the alchemists and Rosicrucians who had left a great mass of mystical writings. The interpretation of these was the business of the adepts, and the fair conclusion appeared to be, that instruction from the Kabala formed part of the ceremony of initiation into the "Order of the Golden Door"—an Order which, so far as I could gather from his allusions, held weekly meetings somewhere in West Kensington. As soon as I asked him for a copy of the book, the conversation drifted back to the alchemists and Rosicrucians, their oaths and conclaves, and when we returned speciously to modern times I heard for the first time about McPherson—a learned one in the Order; he may have been the Prior of it, and that, I think, was the case, for I remember being told that he had used his authority so unflinchingly that the other members had rebelled against it, and now he had, after expelling the entire Order, gone away with the book in which was written much secret matter. So far the Order had not replied to his repeated libels, but it would be well for McPherson to refrain from publication of their secrets; if he did not, it would be hard to prevent certain among them from . . . Up to the present the authority of a certain lady had saved him, but it was by no means sure that she would be able to protect him in the future; she had, indeed, incurred a good deal . . . I strained my ears, but Yeats' voice had floated up the chimney, and all I could hear was the sound of one hand passing over the other.

Rising from the low stool in the chimney-corner, he led me to a long box packed with manuscripts, and among these I discovered on looking closer several packs of cards. As it could not be that Yeats was a clandestine bridge-player, I inquired the use the cards were put to, and learnt that they were specially designed for the cast-

ing of horoscopes. He spoke of his uncle, a celebrated occultist, whose predictions were always fulfilled, and related some of his own successes. All the same, he had been born under Aquarius, and the calculations of the movements of the stars in that constellation were so elaborate that he had abandoned the task for the moment, and was now seeking the influences of the Pleiades. He showed me some triangles drawn on plain sheets of cardboard, into which I was to look while thinking of some primary colour—red, or blue, or green. His instructions were followed by me—why not?—but nothing came of the experiment; and then he selected a manuscript from the box, which he told me was the new rules of the "Order of the Golden Door," written by himself. There was no need to tell me that, for I recognize always his undulating cadences. These rules had become necessary; an Order could not exist without rule, and heresy must be kept within bounds, though for his part he was prepared to grant everyone such freedom of will as would not endanger the existence of the Order. The reading of the manuscript interested me, and I remember that one of its finest passages related to the use of vestments, Yeats maintaining with undeniable logic that the ancient priest put on his priestly robe as a means whereby he might raise himself out of the ordinary into an intenser life, but the Catholic priest puts on an embroidered habit because it is customary. A subtle intelligence which delighted me in times gone by, and I like now to think of the admiration with which I used to listen to Yeats talking in the chimney-corner, myself regretting the many eloquent phrases which floated beyond recall up the chimney, yet unable to banish from my mind the twenty-five men and women collected in the second pair back in West Kensington, engaged in the casting of horoscopes and experimenting in hypnotism.

As has been said before, analogies can be discovered in

all my boon companions. Could it be otherwise, since they were all collected for my instruction and distraction? Yeats will sit up smoking and talking of literature just like Dujardin, Edward the same; and Yeats and Edward are both addicted to magic: it matters little that each cultivates a different magic, the essential is that they like magic. And looking towards the armchairs in which they had been sitting, I said: "Yeats likes parlour magic, Edward cathedral magic. A queer pair, united for a moment in a common cause—the production of two plays: *The Heather Field* and *The Countess Cathleen. The Heather Field* I know, but *The Countess Cathleen* I have not read," and wondering what it might be like, I went to the bookcase and took down the volume.

CHAP. II.

THREE weeks after Edward knocked at my door.

"Are you busy? I don't want to disturb you, but I thought I'd like to ask you——"

"You have come to tell me that the company has been engaged. No! My dear friend, this is trifling," I cut in sharply, asking if the date had been fixed for the first rehearsal; it seemed necessary to shake him into some kind of activity, and it amused me to see him flurried.

From his narrative it appeared that Miss Vernon, a friend of Yeats, whom they had engaged as general manager, had received letters from a number of actors, and he mentioned the name of one who thought he might like to play the part of Carden Tyrrell.

"Il faut que je m'en mêle," I said one morning, jumping out of bed, "for if I don't there'll be no performance." So I wired to Edward, and in the course of the afternoon he knocked.

"Has this woman called a rehearsal?"

"She has written to a man—I have forgotten his name —he played in one of Ibsen's plays, and hopes to——"

"Yes, I know; and hopes to get an answer from him next week. My dear friend, if the rehearsals don't begin at once there'll be no performance. Run away and engage the company."

He went away red and flurried, and I didn't hear of him again until the end of the week. It was late one afternoon that he called, meeting me on my doorstep. "A moment later and you would have missed me," I said, and the evening being too fine to turn indoors, he agreed that we should go for a walk in St. James's Park.

As I write I can see ourselves walking side by side, Edward's bluff and dogmatic shoulders contrasting with my own very agnostic sloping shoulders; and the houses rising up against the evening sky, delicate in line and colour. I can see a blue spire striking into the heart of the sunset, and the casual winds moving among the branches and among the long silken grass. The pen pauses . . . or I am moved to wonder why I should remember that evening in St. James's Park when so many other evenings are forgotten? Maybe that I was conscious of Edward's emotion; all the while, though outwardly calm as any parish priest, he was troubled inly; and the fact that he expressed his trouble in the simplest language perhaps helped me to understand how deeply troubled he was.

"We have had three or four rehearsals," he confided to me, "but my play is not 'coming out.'" An alarming piece of news, for I had sworn to him that *The Heather Field* was a good play. "But Yeats' play is coming out beautifully."

A still more alarming piece of news, for I did not want to see Yeats supreme in these theatricals; and without betraying my concern, I told him that Yeats' play was poetry, and had only to be repeated, whereas

The Heather Field would have to be carefully rehearsed, and by an experienced stage-manager.

"Now, who is your stage-manager? What does he say? And is he competent?"

As Edward at that time had never seen a stage-manager at work he could form no opinion of the man's ability, nor did he seem to have a clear idea whether the actors and actresses were competent and suited to their parts. "I can't tell from a rehearsal," he said. "Yeats and I went together to the agent's office——"

"I know, and you chose the company from the description in the agent's book. 'Miss X., tall, fair, good presence—I think she'll do for your leading lady, sir.' 'How much?' 'Four pounds a week.' 'I can't afford so much. Three?' 'I think I could get her to accept three pounds ten.' 'Very well.' 'Now for your leading man. Tall, dark, aristocratic bearing. Five.' 'I can't give so much.' 'You might get him to take four.'"

"That's just what he is getting," said Edward.

There must have been an outburst; rude words were uttered by me, no doubt; one is unjust, and then one remembers and is sorry. Edward had never cast a play before; he had never engaged a company, nor had he ever seen a rehearsal; therefore my expectations that he would succeed in so delicate an enterprise were ridiculous.

"If you would come to see a rehearsal," he ventured timidly.

This very natural request can only have provoked another outburst; one learns oneself, and in the course of my rage, not quite spontaneous, I must have reminded him that I had specially stipulated that I was not to be asked to cast or rehearse plays.

"If you would only just come to see one rehearsal."

"Anything else, but not that," I answered sullenly, and walked on in silence, giving no heed to Edward's assurance that the mere fact of my going to see a rehearsal

would not transgress our agreement. There were my proofs; it would be folly to lay them aside, and striving against myself, for at the back of my mind I knew I would yield, I swore again that I would not go. But if I didn't? The thought of these two wandering over to Dublin with their ridiculous company was a worry. *The Heather Field* would be lost; Edward would be bitterly disappointed; his play was his pleasure; besides, it was annoying to hear that *The Countess Cathleen* was coming out better than *The Heather Field.* So it was perhaps jealousy of Yeats that caused the sudden declension of my will; and when the question, "Where are you rehearsing?" slipped from me, I knew that for three weeks at least I should be up to my neck in their business. Once I had altered something I should not leave *The Heather Field,* nor perhaps *The Countess Cathleen,* if Yeats allowed me to rehearse it, until it was quite clear to me that the expedition to Dublin would not turn out so absurd as General Humbard's.

"Where are you rehearsing?"

"At the Bijou Theatre in Notting Hill."

"Very amateurish. It is impossible to rehearse anywhere except in the Strand."

"We will rehearse anywhere you like"; and he continued to press me to say why I was so averse from seeing the plays. "You're coming to Dublin?"

"I never said I was. If the plays were going to be acted in London it would be a different thing, but to ally myself to such folly as the bringing of literature to Ireland! *Les Cloches de Corneville* is what they want over there." And next morning in the hansom I continued to poke Edward up with the sharpest phrases I could find, and to ask myself why I had yielded to his solicitations. For his sake, or for the sake of his play—which? He is an amateur; that is to say, a man of many interests, one of which is literature. Edward is interested in his

soul, deeply interested; he is interested in Palestrina and in his property in Galway, and the sartorial reformation of the clergy. He would like to see the clergy in cassocks. Then there are his political interests. He wants Home Rule, and when he is thinking of none of these things he writes plays.

But he had written a very good play, and I am always ready to stretch out a hand to save a work of art, however little merit it may have, if it only have a little. Yeats is like me in this. Other men write for money, or for fame, or to kill time, but we are completely disinterested. We are moved by the love of the work itself, and therefore can make sacrifices for other men's work. Yeats is certainly like that, and for disinterestedness in art I'm sure he would give me a good character. My reverie was interrupted by Edward crying: "There's Yeats," and I saw the long black cloak with the manuscript sticking out of the pocket, and the rooklike gait, and a lady in a green cloak. My stick went up, the cab stopped, and as we entered the theatre Edward told me that Yeats and the lady had been in and out of the bun-shop ever since rehearsals began.

"I knew it, I knew it; I can see it all—talking continually of the speaking of verse."

Two or three people on a stage, repeating as much as they can remember of something they have been trying to learn by heart, and a man with a script in his hand watching and interrupting them with some phrase like "I think, old man, the line, 'If you are convinced that that is so,' should get you across," are the externals of every rehearsal; but whoever is in the habit of conducting rehearsals can tell at the first glance if things are going well or badly, if the actors are interested in their work, and, above all, if the stage-manager knows his business. A play is like music; it has to go to a beat; and it did not take me long to see that *The Heather Field*

was not going to a bad or a good beat; it was just going to no beat at all, and I said to Edward:

"Which is your stage-manager? The one reading from the script? But he isn't rehearsing the play; he's prompting, that's all."

Edward begged me to be patient, but in a very few minutes it was clear to me that patience meant wasting time.

"We shall have to make some alterations in the cast. Mr. ——, I don't think the part of Carden Tyrrell altogether suits you; the second part, Barry Ussher——" The gentleman who was playing Barry Ussher objected. "You'll play," I said, "perhaps, one of the doctors in the second act. Now, Edward, who is your leading lady?"

Edward whispered: "The fair-haired lady——"

"But she looks as if she had come from the halls."

"So she has. She's been doing a turn."

"And you expect a music-hall artist to play Mrs. Tyrrell!"

Edward besought me to try her.

"Will you, Miss ——, if you please, read your part from your first entrance?" With some reluctance the lady rose out of her seat, and went upon the stage. She did not think the part suited her, and it was with evident relief that she agreed to give it up and accept two pounds for her trouble. Then I entered into discussion with the gentleman who had been told that he was not to play Barry Ussher.

"Now, sir, if you'll read me the part of one of the doctors from the first entrance." A few words from him on the stage amounted to a conviction that, like the fair-haired lady, he would be of no use to me; but when he was told so he caught up a chair, threw it at me, and swore and damned the whole company and all the plays. An irate little actor interposed, saying that Mr. —— should try to remember that he was in the presence of

ladies. Edward was appealed to, but he said the matter was entirely out of his hands, and in the course of the next half-hour three or four more members of the company received small doles from Edward, and went their several ways.

"We've got through a very nice rehearsal," I whispered, taking Edward's arm—"very satisfactory indeed, dear Edward." For it was just as well to show a bold front, although, indeed, I was a little frightened. The responsibility of collecting an efficient company was now my share of the Irish Literary Theatre, and if I failed and the plays did not go to Dublin . . . Even so, it were better that the project should fall through than that the plays should go distributed among such odds and oddments. "One can go out hunting," I said to Edward, "on bad horses, but one can't go out hunting on goats." And I impressed this point of view upon Yeats too, begging of him to try to find a small part among the peasants in his play for the gentleman who had thrown the chair at me; he had since apologized, and seemed so distressed at his own bad conduct, that I thought I must do something for him. "A few words to speak, that is all I ask, Yeats. Edward and I are going to the Strand to find a Carden Tyrrell and a Mrs. Tyrrell."

"And we're going to the bun-shop, where we have an appointment with Miss Vernon's niece. Her speaking of verse——"

"Don't trouble; I'll bring you back a Countess Cathleen, my good friend."

Edward sat back in the hansom, too terrified for speech, and as we went along I explained to him the disaster that had been averted. At last we came to the Green Room Club, and opposite two friends of mine were living. "The wife is just the woman to play Mrs. Tyrrell. She wouldn't do the Countess Cathleen badly, either. Be that as it may, she'll have to play it." And

we went up the stairs praying that we might find her at home; she was, and after a little solicitation agreed to come with us.

"Now, Edward, do you follow in another cab. I'll jump into this one with Miss ——, and will tell her about the Irish Literary Theatre, and that we want her to play leading parts in Dublin, in two of the most beautiful plays of modern times." Mrs. Tyrrell and the Countess Cathleen whiled the miles away. "There's Yeats"—and putting up my stick I stopped the cab—"the man in the long black cloak like a Bible reader, coming out of the bun-shop."

"With the woman in the long green cloak followed by a pretty girl?"

"Deeply engaged," I said, "in conversation."

It was difficult to attract his attention, and his emotions were so violent that he could hardly collect himself sufficiently to bow to the new Countess Cathleen, and for the first time this master of words could not find words to tell us of the joy he had experienced at hearing his verses properly spoken. Miss Vernon's niece had recited the monologue in the second act——

"I'm glad, Yeats, very glad; and now you'll have the pleasure of hearing somebody else recite the monologue."

"But won't you hear——"

"The monologue isn't the part. My dear young lady," I said, turning to a girl, about sixteen, "we've reserved one of the fairies for you, and you'll look enchanting in a blue veil. The Countess Cathleen requires an experienced actress. Now, Miss ——, you who can speak verse better than any living actress, will you read us the monologue, for your pleasure and for ours? I have told Mr. Yeats about you, and . . . now, will you be so kind?"

The experienced actress went on the stage, and while she recited my mind turned over all the possible Carden

Tyrrells in the Green Room Club; but Yeats had been listening, and as soon as I had congratulated her he began to talk to her about his method. My anger was checked by the thought that the quickest way, and perhaps the only way, to rid ourselves of Yeats would be to ask him to go on the stage and read his verses to us. There was no choice for him but to comply, and when he left the stage I took him by the arm, saying:

"One can hear that kind of thing, my dear fellow, on Sunday, in any Methodist chapel."

Yeats' face betrayed his disappointment, but there is a fund of good sense in him which can be relied upon, and he had already begun to understand that, however good his ideas might be in themselves, he had not had enough experience to carry them out, and that there was no time to experiment. What I would do with his play would not be what he wanted, but I should realize something.

"Now, Edward, I'll say good-bye; I must get back to the Green Room Club. I may find your husband there, Miss ——, playing cards; if I do I shall try to persuade him to undertake the stage-management. I'll write and let you know about the next rehearsal; Notting Hill is too far away. We must find some place in the Strand, don't you think so, Miss ——?"

Miss —— agreed with me that Notting Hill was too far for her to go to rehearsals, and as I handed her out of the cab, she pointed with her parasol across the street, and looking along it, I spied a man in a velvet coat going into the Green Room Club. She said he might play Carden Tyrrell. A friend introduced us; I gave him the part to read, and he came to rehearsal next day enthusiastic. A boy presented himself—and an excellent boy-actor he showed himself to be, giving a good reading of his part, and a few days after Miss ——'s husband relieved me

of the stage-management, and seeing that things were going well, I bade everybody good-bye.

"I'm going back to my writing, but will give you a look in some time next week, towards the end of the week, for my publishers are pressing me to finish some proofs."

The proofs were those of *Esther Waters,* not the proofs of the original edition (they had been corrected in the Temple), but the proofs of a cheap edition. I had been tempted by the opportunity a new typesetting gave me of revising my text, and had begun, amid many misgivings, to read a book which I had written, but never read. One reads when the passion of composition is over, and on the proofs of the original edition one correction alone amounted to the striking out of some twenty or thirty pages, and the writing in of as many more new pages, and there were many others nearly as important, for proofs always inspire me, and the enchanted period lasts until the bound copy arrives. *Esther Waters* was no exception; and turning the pages, seeing all my dreams frozen into the little spaces of print, I had thrown the book aside and had sat like one overcome until the solitude of King's Bench Walk became unendurable, and forced me to seek distraction in St. James's Theatre, for I did not think that anyone had yet read the book, and was genuinely surprised when an acquaintance stopped me in the lobby and began to thank me for the pleasure my story had given him. But I could not believe that he was not mocking me, and escaped from him, feeling more miserable than before. A little farther on another acquaintance stopped me to ask if I had written the book with the intention of showing up the evils of betting, and his question was understood as an ironical insinuation that the existence of my book might be excused on account of the moral purpose on the part of the author. Or was my intention merely to exhibit? His second question struck me as intelligent, but strange as coming from him. His

writings have since gained some notoriety, but not because he has ever confined himself to the mere exhibition of a subject.

The old saw that "everything is paid for" came into my mind. I was paying for the exaltation I had experienced when rewriting my proofs, and when I returned to the Temple I had fallen into an armchair, without sufficient energy to take off my clothes and turn into bed, wondering at my folly in having supposed that there could have been anything worth reading in *Esther Waters*. How could there be, since it was I who wrote it? I repeated to myself over and over again.

For it is difficult for me to believe any good of myself. Within the oftentimes bombastic and truculent appearance that I present to the world, trembles a heart shy as a wren in the hedgerow or a mouse along the wainscotting. And the question has always interested me, whether I brought this lack of belief in myself into the world with me, or whether it was a gift from Nature, or whether I was trained into it by my parents at so early an age that it became part of myself. I lean to the theory of acquisition rather than to that of inheritance, for it seems to me that I can trace my inveterate distrust of myself back to the years when my father and mother used to tell me that I would certainly marry an old woman, Honor King, who used to come to the door begging. The joke did not wear out; it lasted through my childhood; and I remember still how I used to dread her appearance, or her name, for either was sufficient to incite somebody to remind me of the nuptials that awaited me in a few years. I understood very well that the joke rested on the assumption that I was such an ugly little boy that nobody else would marry me.

I do not doubt that my parents loved their little boy, but their love did not prevent them laughing at him and persuading him that he was inherently absurd; and it is

not wise to do this, for as soon as the child ceases to take himself seriously he begins to suspect that he is inferior, and I had begun to doubt if I would ever come to much, even before I failed to read at the age of seven, without hesitating, a page of English written with the long *ſſ*'s, whereas my father could remember reading the *Times* aloud at breakfast when he was three. I could see that he thought me a stupid little boy, and was ashamed of me, and as the years went by many things occurred to confirm him in his opinion. The reports that were sent home from school incited him to undertake to teach me when I came back for the holidays, but the more I was taught the stupider I became, and, perhaps, the more unwilling to learn. My father was trying to influence me directly, and it is certain that direct influence counts for nothing. We are moulded, but the influences that mould us are indirect, and are known to nobody but ourselves. We never speak of them, and are almost ashamed even to think of them, so trivial do they seem. It requires some little courage to tell that my early distaste for literature was occasioned by my father coming into the billiard-room where I was playing and insisting on my reading Burke's *French Revolution;* nor does it sound very serious to say that a meeting with a cousin of mine who used to paint sign-board lions and tigers awakened a love of painting in me that has lasted all my life. He sent me to Paris to learn painting; I have told in my *Confessions* how I found myself obliged to give up painting, having no natural aptitude for it; but I do not know if I tell in that book, or lay sufficient stress on the fact that the agony of mind caused by my failure was enhanced by remembrances of the opinion that my father formed of me and my inability to learn at school. I think I am right in saying that I tell in my *Confessions* of terrible insomnias and of a demon who whispered in my ear that it would be no use my turning

to literature; my failure would be as great there as it had been in painting.

The slight success that has attended my writings did not surprise my relations as much as it surprised me, and what seems to me curious is that, if the success had been twice what it was, it would not have restored to me the confidence in myself that I lost in childhood. I am always a novice, publishing his first book, wondering if it is the worst thing ever written; and I am as timid in life as in literature. It is always difficult for me to believe that my friends are glad to see me. I am never quite sure that I am not a bore—an unpleasant belief, no doubt, but a beneficial one, for it saves me from many blunders, and I owe to it many pleasant surprises: that day at Steer's, when Tonks interrupted me in one of my usual disquisitions on art with—"Isn't it nice to have him in our midst again criticizing our paintings?" I had come back from Ireland after an absence of two years, and I shall never forget the delicious emotion that his words caused me. It had not occurred to me that my friends had missed me, or that it would mean much to them to see me again. And were I Rousseau, my pages would be filled with instances of my inherent modesty of character, but my way is not Rousseau's. Out of this one instance the reader should be able, if he be intelligent, to imagine for himself the hundred other exquisite moments that I owe to my inveterate belief in my own inferiority. True that it has caused me to lose many pleasant hours, as when I imagined that some very dear friends of mine were bored by my society, and did not wish to see me in their house again. Mary Robinson did not say a word to suggest any such thing, only there are times when the belief intensifies in me that nobody does, or could, care for me or feel any interest in me; and I did not go to see her for a long while, and would never have gone if I had not met her at her railway-station, and if she had not

asked me if I were on my way to her, and on my answering that I wasn't, had not cheerfully replied that I ought to be, it being nearly two years since she had seen me.

"But you don't want to see me? The last time, just as I was leaving——"

She looked at me and I tried to explain, but there was nothing to explain, and I walked by her side thinking of the many delightful visits that my imagination had caused me to lose.

No doubt something of the same kind has happened to everybody, but not so often as it happened to me—I am sure of that, and I am quite sure that nobody believes that he is in the wrong so easily as I do, or is tempted so irresistibly to believe that the fault is his if anything goes wrong with his work. If an editor were to return an article to me to-morrow, it would never occur to me to think that he returned it for any other reason than its utter worthlessness, and those who think badly of my writings are always looked upon as very fine judges, while admirers are regarded with suspicion. Symons used to say that he could not understand such a lack of belief side by side with unflagging perseverance, and he often told me that when a manuscript was returned to him, he never doubted the editor to be a fool. . . . The *Confessions* are coming back to me. Rousseau realized in age that in youth Rousseau was a shy silly lad, with no indication, apparently, of the genius that awaited him in middle age, always blundering, and never with the right word on his lips. But I do not think Rousseau was obsessed by a haunting sense of his own inferiority—not, at any rate, as much as I am—and I am not sure that he realized sufficiently that the braggart wins but foolish women and the vain man has few sincere friends. If it had not been for my unchanging belief in my own unworthiness, I might have easily believed in myself to the extent that my contemporaries believe in themselves,

and there is little doubt that many of them believe themselves to be men and women of genius; and I am sure it were better, on the whole, to leave St. James's Theatre heart-broken than to leave it puffed up, thinking oneself a great man of letters, representing English literature. Even from the point of view of personal pleasure, it were better that I should learn gradually that *Esther Waters* was not such a bad book as I had imagined it to be when the first copy came to me. It were enough that my friends and the Press should succeed at length in hammering this truth into me; it were too absurd that I should continue to think it worthless; an artist should know his work to have been well done, and it is necessary that it should meet with sufficient appreciation, though, indeed, it is open to doubt if the vain fumes that arise from the newspapers when a new "masterpiece" is published be of any good to anybody.

Only once can I accuse myself of any sudden vanity called out of the depths by the sight of a newspaper placard—once certain words excited in me a shameless sense of triumph at, shall I say, having got the better of somebody?—only once, and it did not endure longer than while walking past St. Clement Danes.

I am less ashamed to speak of the joy I experienced five years after the first publication of *Esther Waters*. "The task has to be got through," I said, throwing myself into an armchair, having left my friends at rehearsal. The hospital scenes were not liked, but the story soon picked up again, and when the end came I sat wondering how it could have happened to me to write the book that among all books I should have cared most to write, and to have written it so much better than I ever dreamed it could be written.

The joy of art is a harmless joy, and no man should begrudge me the pleasure that the only book of mine I ever read gave me. He would not, though he were the

most selfish in the world, if he knew the unhappiness and anxieties that my writings always cause me. A harmless joy, the reading of *Esther Waters,* truly, and it is something to think of that the book itself, though pure of all intention "to do good"—that is to say, to alleviate material suffering—has perhaps done more "good" than any novel written in my generation. It is no part of my business nor my desire to speak of the "Esther Waters" Home—I am much more concerned with the evil I know the book to have done than with the good. It did good to others—to me it did evil, and that evil I could see all around me when I raised my eyes from my proofs. At the end of a large, handsome, low-ceilinged flat on the first-floor, very different from the garret in King's Bench Walk, hung a grey portrait by Manet; on another wall a mauve morning by Monet, willows emerging from a submerged meadow; on another an April girl sitting in an arbour, her golden hair glittering against green leaves, by Berthe Morisot. The flowered carpet and all the pretty furniture scattered over it represented evil, and the comfortable cook who came to ask me what I would like for dinner. We read in the newspapers of the evil a book may produce—the vain speculation of erotic men and women; but here is a case of a thoroughly healthy book having demoralized its author. How is such evil to be restrained? All virtuous men and women may well ask, and I hope that they may put their heads together and find out a way.

In Paris I had lived very much as I lived in Victoria Street, but it had never occurred to me that I showed any merit by accepting, without murmuring, the laborious life in the Temple that a sudden reverse of fortune had forced upon me;* it was no suffering for me to live in a garret, wearing old clothes, and spending from two shillings to half a crown on my dinner, because I

* See *Confessions of a Young Man.*

felt, and instinctively, that that is the natural life of a man of letters; and I can remember my surprise when my brother told me one day that my agent had said he never knew anybody so economical as George. Some time after Tom Ruttledge himself came panting up my stairs, and during the course of conversation regarding certain large sums of money which I heard of for the first time, he said: "Well, you have spent very little money during the last few years." And when I spoke of the folly of other landlords, he added: "There are very few who would be content to live in a cockloft like this."

And looking round my room I realized that what he said was true; I was living in a cockloft, bitterly cold in winter and stifling in summer; the sun beating on the windows fiercely in the afternoon, obliging me to write in my shirt sleeves. And it so happened that a few days after Tom Ruttledge's visit a lady called by appointment —a lady whom I was so anxious to see that I did not wait to put on my coat before opening the door. My plight and the fatigue of three long flights of stairs caused her to speak her mind somewhat plainly.

"A gentleman," she said, "wouldn't ask a lady to come to such a place; and he wouldn't forget to put his coat on before opening the door to her."

"But you have received me dressed still more lightly."

"With me it is all or nothing," she said laughing, her ill-humour passing away suddenly. All the same, I realized that she was right; the Temple is too rough and too public a place for a lady, and it is an inconvenient place, too, for in the Temple it is only possible to ask a lady to dinner during forty days in the year. Only for forty days are there dinners in the hall; the sutler then will send over an excellent dinner of homely British fare to anyone living in the Temple. She used to enjoy these dinners, but they did not happen often enough; and it was the necessity of providing myself with a suitable

trysting place that drew me out of the poverty to which I owe so much of my literature, and despite many premonitions compelled me to sign the lease of a handsome flat. The flat sent me forth collecting pretty furniture which she never saw, for she never came to Victoria Street. I should have written better if I had remained in the Temple, within hearing and seeing of the poor folk that run in and out of Temple Lane like mice, picking up a living in the garrets, for, however poor one may be there is always somebody by one who is still poorer. *Esther Waters* was a bane—the book snatched me, not only out of that personal poverty which is necessary to the artist, but out of the way of all poverty.

My poor laundress used to tell me every day (the charwomen who work in the Temple are called laundresses, some say because they never wash anything, not even themselves) of her troubles, and through her I became acquainted with many other poor people, and they awakened spontaneous sympathy in me, and by doing them kindnesses I was making honey for myself without knowing it. *Esther Waters* and Tom Ruttledge robbed me of all my literary capital; and I had so little, only a few years of poverty. I've forgotten how long I lived in the Strand lodging described in my *Confessions*—two years I think; I was five or six in Dane's Inn, and seven in the Temple—about twelve lean years in all; and twelve lean years are not enough, nor was my poverty hard enough. The last I saw of literature was when my poor laundress came to see me in Victoria Street. Standing in the first position of dancing (she used to dance when she was young), she looked round the drawing-room. Five pounds was my farewell present to her! How mean we seem when we look back into our lives! When her son wrote to ask me to help her in her old age I forgot to do so, and this confession costs me as much as some of Rousseau's cost him. . . . In bidding her good-bye I bade

good-bye to literature. No, she didn't inspire the subject of *Esther Waters,* but she was the atmosphere I required for the book, and to talk to her at breakfast before beginning to write was an excellent preparation. In Victoria Street there was nobody to help me; my cook was nearly useless (in the library), and the parlour-maid quite useless. She had no stories to tell me of the poor who wouldn't be able to live at all if it weren't for the poor. She thought, instead, that I ought to go into society, and at the end of the week opened the door so gleefully to Edward that she seemed to say: "At last somebody has called."

I turned round in my chair: "Well, how are the rehearsals going on?" I noticed that he was unusually red and flurried. He had come to tell me that Yeats had that morning turned up at rehearsal, and was now explaining his method of speaking verse to the actors, while the lady in the green cloak gave illustrations of it on a psaltery. At such news as this a man cries "Great God!" and pales. For sure I paled, and besought Edward not to rack my nerves with a description of the instrument or of the lady's execution upon it. In a fine rage I started out of my seat in the bow-window, crying: "Edward, run, and be in time to catch that cab going by." He did this, and on the way to the Strand indignation boiled too fiercely to hear anything until the words "quarter tones" struck my ear.

"Lord save us! Quarter tones! Why, he can't tell a high note from a low one!" And leaving to Edward the business of paying the cab, I hurried through the passage and into the theatre, seeking till I found Yeats behind some scenery in the act of explanation to the mummers, whilst the lady in the green cloak, seated on the ground, plucked the wires, muttering the line, "Cover it up with a lonely tune." And all this going on while mummers were wanted on the stage, and while an expe-

rienced actress walked to and fro like a pantheress. It was to her I went cautiously as the male feline approaches the female (in a different intent, however) and persuaded her to come back to her part.

As soon as she had consented I returned to Yeats with much energetic talk on the end of my tongue, but finding him so gentle, there was no need for it; he betook himself to a seat, after promising in rehearsal language "to let things rip," and we sat down together to listen to *The Countess Cathleen,* rehearsed by the lady who had put her psaltery aside and was going about with a reticule on her arm, rummaging in it from time to time for certain memoranda, which when found seemed only to deepen her difficulty. Her stage-management was all right in her notes, Yeats informed me:

"But she can't transfer it from paper on to the stage," he said, without appearing in the least to wish that the stage-management of his play should be taken from her. At that moment the voice of the experienced actress asking the poor lady how she was to get up the stage drew my attention from Yeats to the reticule, which was searched unsuccessfully for a satisfactory answer. The experienced actress walked up the stage and stood there looking contemptuously at Miss Vernon, who laid herself down on the floor and began speaking through the chinks. Her dramatic intention was so obscure that perforce I had to ask her what it was, and learned from her that she was evoking hell.

"But the audience will think you are trying to catch cockroaches."

Yeats whirled forward in his cloak with the suggestion that she should stand on a chair and wave her hands.

"That will never do, Yeats"; the lady interrupted, asking me how hell should be evoked, and later begged to be allowed to hand over the rehearsal of *The Countess Cathleen* to the experienced actress's husband, who said

he would undertake to get the play on the stage if Mr. Yeats would promise not to interfere with him.

Yeats promised, but as he had promised me before not to interfere, I felt myself obliged to beg him to take himself off for a fortnight.

"The temptation to deliver orations on the speaking of verse is too great to be resisted, Yeats."

One can always manage to do business with a clever man, and with a melancholy caw Yeats went away in his long cloak leaving Mr. —— to settle how the verses should be spoken; and feeling that my presence was no longer required, I returned to my novel, certain that Erin would not be robbed of the wassail-bowl we were preparing for her. But there is always a hand to snatch the bowl from Erin's lips, and at the end of the week Yeats came to tell me that Edward had gone to consult a theologian, and was no longer sure that he would be able to allow the performance of *The Countess Cathleen*.

"You see, he's paying for it, and believes himself to be responsible for the heresy which the friar detects in it."

Every other scene described in this book has been traced faithfully from memory; even the dialogues may be considered as practically authentic, but all memory of Yeats bringing news to me of Edward's vacillations seemed to have floated from my mind until Yeats pitted his memory against mine. My belief was that it was in Ireland that Edward had consulted the theologian, but Yeats is certain that it was in London. He gave me a full account of it in Victoria Street, and was careful "to put geasa upon me," as himself would word it, which in English means that he was careful to demand a promise from me not to reproach Edward with his backsliding until the company had left Euston. The only interest in the point is that I who remember everything should have forgotten it. There can be no doubt that Yeats' version is the true one; it appears that I was very angry

with Edward, and did write him a letter which flurried him and brought him to Yeats with large sweat upon his forehead. Of this I am sure, that if I were angry with Edward, it was not because he feared to bring an heretical play to Dublin—a man has a right to his conscience—if I were angry, it was because he should have neglected to find out what he really thought of *The Countess Cathleen* before it went into rehearsal. It seemed that, after giving up many of my days to the casting of his play, and to the casting of *The Countess Cathleen,* it was not fair for him to cry off, and at the last moment. He had seen *The Countess Cathleen* rehearsed day after day, and to consult a friar about a play was not worthy of a man of letters. But he was not a man of letters, only an amateur, and he would remain one, notwithstanding *The Heather Field*—Symons had said it. What annoyed me perhaps even more than the sudden interjection of the friar into our business, were Edward's still further vacillations, for after consultation with the friar he was not yet certain as to what he was going to do. "Such a state of mind," I must have declared to Yeats, "is horrifying and incomprehensible to me." Edward's hesitation must have enraged me against him. It is difficult for me to understand how I could have forgotten the incident. . . . It seems to me that I do remember it now. But how faint my memory of it is compared with my memory of the departure of the mummers from Euston! Yeats and the lady in green had started some days before —Yeats to work up the Press, and the lady to discover the necessary properties that would be required in Dublin for both plays. Noggins were wanted for *The Countess Cathleen,* and noggins could not be procured in London. Yeats and the lady in green were our agents in advance, Edward with universal approbation casting himself for the part of baggage-man. He was splendid in it, with a lady's bag on his arm, running up and down

the station at Euston, shepherding his flock, shouting that all the luggage was now in the van, and crying: "The boy, who is to look after him? I will be back with the tickets in a moment." Away he fled and at the ticket-office he was impassive, monumental, muttering fiercely to impatient bystanders that he must count his money, that he had no intention of leaving till he was sure he had been given the right change.

"Now, are you not coming with us?" he cried to me, and would have pulled me into the train if I had not disengaged myself, saying:

"No, no; I will not travel without clothes. Loose me." The very words do I remember, and the telegram two days after: "The sceptre of intelligence has passed from London to Dublin." Again and again I read Edward's telegram. If it be true, if art be winging her way westward? And a vision rose up before me of argosies floating up the Liffey, laden with merchandise from all the ports of Phœnicia, and poets singing in all the bowers of Merrion Square; and all in a new language that the poets had learned, the English language having been discovered by them, as it had been discovered by me, to be a declining language, a language that was losing its verbs.

The inflaming telegram arrived in the afternoon, and it was possible for me to start that evening; but it seemed to me that the returning native should see Ireland arising from the sea, and thinking how beautiful the crests would show against the sunset, I remembered a legend telling how the earliest inhabitants of Ireland had the power of making the island seem small as a pig's back to her enemies, and a country of endless delight to her friends.

And while I sat wondering whether Ireland would accept me as a friend or as an enemy, the train steamed through the Midlands; and my anger against Edward, who preferred his soul to his art, was forgotten; it evaporated gently like the sun haze at the edges of the wood

yonder. A quiet, muffled day continued its dreams of spring and summer time; but my thoughts were too deeply set in memories of glens where fairy-bells are heard, to heed the simple facts of Nature—the hedgerows breaking into flower, the corn now a foot high in the fields, birds rising out of it, birds flying from wood to wood in the dim sunny air, flying as if they, that had been flying all their lives, still found pleasure in taking the air. I was too deeply set in my adventure to notice the red towns that flashed past, nor did I sentimentalize over the lot of those who lived in those ugly parallel streets—human warrens I should call them. I could think of nothing else but the sweetness of Étaine's legs as she washed them in the woodlands; of Angus coming perhaps to meet her, his doves flying round him; of Grania and Diarmuid sleeping under cromlechs, or meeting the hermit in the forest who had just taken three fish out of the stream, of the horns of Finn heard in the distance, and the baying of his hounds.

The sudden sight of shaw, spinney, and sagging stead would at other times have carried my thoughts back into medieval England, perhaps into some play of Shakespeare's, interwoven with kings and barons; now the legends of my own country—the renascent Ireland—absorbed me, and so completely, that I did not notice the passing of Stafford and Crewe. It was not until the train flashed through Chester that I awoke from my reveries sufficiently to admire the line of faint yellow hills, caught sight of suddenly, soon passing out of view. Before my wonderment ceased we were by a wide expanse of water, some vast river or estuary of the sea, with my line of yellow hills far away—cape, promontory, or embaying land, I knew not which, until a fellow-passenger told me that we were travelling along the Dee, and at low tide the boats, now proudly floating, would be lying on the empty sand. A beautiful view it was at high

tide, the languid water lapping the rocks within a few feet of the railway; and a beautiful view it doubtless was at low tide—miles and miles of sand, a streak of water flashing half-way between me and the distant shore.

We went by a manufacturing town, and there must have been mines underneath the fields, for the ground sagged, and there were cinder-heaps among the rough grass. Conway Castle was passed; it reminded me of the castles of my own country, and Anglesea reminded me of the Druids. Yeats had told me that the Welsh Druids used to visit their brethren in Ireland to learn the deeper mysteries of their craft. Pictures rose up in my mind of these folk going forth in their galleys, plied with oar or borne by sail, I knew not; and I would have crossed the sea in a ship rather than in a steamer. It was part of my design to sit under a sail and be the first to catch sight of the Irish hills. But the eye of the landsman wearies of the horizon, and it is possible that I went below and ordered the steward to call me in time; and it is also possible that I rolled myself up in a rug and sat on the deck, though this be not my ordinary way of travelling; but having no idea at the time of writing this book, no notes were taken, and after the lapse of years details cannot be discovered.

But I do remember myself on deck watching the hills now well above the horizon, asking myself again if Ireland were going to appear to me "small as a pig's back" or a land of "extraordinary enchantment"? It was the hills themselves that reminded me of the legend—on the left, rough and uncomely as a drove of pigs running down a lane, with one tall hill very like the peasant whom I used to see in childhood, an old man that wore a tall hat, knee-breeches, worsted stockings, and brogues. "Like a pig's back Ireland has appeared to me," I said; but soon after on my right a lovely hill came into view, shapen

like a piece of sculpture, and I said: "Perhaps I am going to see Ireland as an enchanted isle after all."

While debating which oracle I should accept, the steamer churned along the side of the quay, where I expected, if not a deputation, at least some friends to meet me; but no one was there, though a telegram had been sent to Yeats and Edward informing them of my journey. And as there was nobody on the platform at Westland Row to receive me, I concluded that they were waiting at the Shelbourne Hotel for me. But I entered that hotel as any stranger from America might, unknown, unwelcomed, and it was with a sinking heart that I asked vainly if Edward had left a note for me, an invitation to dine with him at his club. He had forgotten. He never thinks of the gracious thing to do, not because he is unkind, but because he is a little uncouth. "He will be glad to see me," I said, "when we meet." All the same, it seemed to me uncouth to neglect me like this, leaving me to eat a solitary table d'hôte dinner when I had come over in his honour. And while chewing the casual food that the German waiters handed me, I meditated the taunts that I would address to him about the friar whose advice he had sought in London, and whose advice he had not followed. "He runs after his soul like a dog after his tail, and lets it go when he catches it," I muttered as I went down the street, too angry to admire Merrion Square, beautiful under the illumination of the sunset, making my way with quick, irritable steps towards the Antient Concert Rooms, whither the hall-porter had directed me, and finding them by a stone-cutter's yard. "Angels and crosses! A truly suitable place for a play by Edward Martyn," I said. The long passage leading to the rooms seemed to be bringing me into a tomb. "Nothing very renascent about this," I said, pushing my way through the spring doors into a lofty hall with a balcony and benches down the middle, and there

were seats along the walls placed so that those who sat on them would have to turn their heads to see the stage, a stage that had been constructed hurriedly by advancing some rudely-painted wings and improvising a drop-curtain.

There is something melancholy in the spectacle of human beings enjoying themselves, but the melancholy of this dim hall I had never seen before, except in some of Sickert's pictures: the loneliness of an audience, and its remoteness as it sits watching a small illuminated space where mummers are moving to and fro reciting their parts.

"And it is here that Edward thinks that heresy will flourish and put mischief into men's hearts," I thought, and searched for him among the groups, finding him not; but Yeats was there, listening reverentially to the sound of his verses. He went away as soon as the curtain fell, returning just before the beginning of the next act, his cloak and his locks adding, I thought, to the melancholy of the entertainment. His intentness interested me so much that I did not venture to interrupt it. His play seemed to be going quite well, but in the middle of the last act some people came on the stage whom I did not recognize as part of the cast, and immediately the hall was filled with a strange wailing, intermingled with screams; and now, being really frightened, I scrambled over the benches, and laying my hand upon Yeats' shoulder begged him to tell me what was happening. He answered, "The *caoine*—the *caoine*." A true *caoine* and its singers had been brought from Galway.

"From Galway!" I exclaimed. "You miserable man! and you promised me that the play should be performed as it was rehearsed. Instead of attending to your business you have been wandering about from cabin to cabin, seeking these women."

Immediately afterwards the gallery began to howl,

and that night the Antient Concert Rooms reminded me of a cats' and a dogs' home suddenly merged into one. "You see what you have brought upon yourself, miserable man!" I cried in Yeats' ear.

"It is not," he said, "the *caoine* they are howling at, but the play itself."

"But the play seemed to be going very well," I interjected, failing to understand him.

"I would hear the Countess's last speech—I'll tell you after."

"A man must love his play very much," I thought, "to be able to listen to it in such distressing circumstances." He did not seem to hear the cat-calls, and when the last lines had been spoken he asked if I had seen *The Cross or the Guillotine*. "Wasn't it put into your hand as you came into the theatre?" And while walking to the hotel with me he told me that the author of this pamphlet was an old enemy of his. All the heresies in *The Countess Cathleen* were quoted in the pamphlet, and the writer appealed to Catholic feeling to put a stop to the blasphemy. "Last night," Yeats said, "we had to have the police in, and Edward, I am afraid, will lose heart; he will fear the scandal and may stop the play." He spoke not angrily of Edward as I should have done, but kindly and sympathetically, telling me that I must not forget that Edward is a Catholic, "and to bring a play over that shocks people's feelings is a serious matter for him. The play, of course, shocks nobody's feelings, but it gives people an opportunity to think their feelings have been shocked, and it gives other people an opportunity of making a noise"; and Yeats told me how popular noise was in Ireland, and controversy, too, when accompanied with the breaking of chairs. But I was too sad for laughter, and begged him to tell me more about the friar whom Edward had consulted in London, and whose theology had not been accepted, per-

haps because Gill had advised Edward that the friar's opinion was only a single opinion, no better and no worse than any other man's. It appeared that Gill had held out a hope to Edward that opinions regarding *The Countess Cathleen,* quite different from the friar's, might be discovered, and I more or less understood that Gill's voice is low and musical, that he had sung " Hush-a-by baby on the tree top "; but a public scandal might awaken the baby again.

" And send it crying to one of the dignitaries of the Church, and so it may well be that we have seen the last of *The Countess Cathleen.*"

Yeats seemed to take the matter very lightly for one whom I had seen deeply interested in the play, and I begged him to explain everything—himself, Edward, the friar, and above all, Ireland.

" In Ireland we don't mean all we say, that is your difficulty," and he began to tell me of the many enemies his politics had made for him, and in a sort of dream I listened, hearing for the hundredth time stories about money that had been collected, purloined, information given to the police, and the swearing of certain men to punish the traitors with death. I was told how these rumoured assassinations had reached the ears of Miss Gonne, and how she and Yeats had determined to save the miscreants; and many fabulous stories of meetings in West Kensington, which in his imagination had become as picturesque as the meetings of Roman and Venetian conspirators in the sixteenth century. A few years before Miss Gonne had proclaimed '98 to a shattering accompaniment of glass in Dame Street, Yeats walking by her, beholding divinity. We have all enjoyed that dream. If our lady be small we see her with a hand-mirror in her boudoir, and if she be tall as an Amazon, well, then we see her riding across the sky hurling a javelin. And the stars! We have all believed that they could tell

us everything if they only would; and we have all gone to someone to cast our horoscopes. So why jeer at Yeats for his humanities? We have all been interested in the Rosicrucians—Shelley our van-bird. Yeats knew all their strange oaths, and looked upon himself as an adept. Even the disastrous pamphlet could not make him utterly forget Jacob Boehm, and we spoke of this wise man, going up Merrion Street—a dry subject, but no subject is dry when Yeats is the talker. "Go on, Yeats," I said—"go on, I like to listen to you; you believe these things because Miss Gonne believes herself to be Joan of Arc, and it is right that a man should identify himself with the woman he admires. Go on, Yeats—go on talking; I like to hear you."

After some further appreciation of Jacob Boehm we returned to the pamphlet.

"It is all very sad, Yeats," I said, "but I cannot talk any more to-night. To-morrow—to-morrow you can come to see me, and we will talk about Edward and *The Cross or the Guillotine.*"

CHAP. III.

WHEN the boots asked me in the morning if I would like to have my water 'otted, it seemed to me that I was back in London; but the bareness of the hotel bedroom soon stimulated my consciousness, and with a pang yesterday returned to me—its telegram, its journey, and the hissing of *The Countess Cathleen* in the Antient Concert Rooms.

"I haven't been shown Ireland as a land of endless enchantment," I said, turning over, "and perhaps the wisest thing for me to do would be to go away by the morning boat." But the morning boat was already in the offing; word should have been left overnight that I was to be called at seven. An impulsive departure would be

in strict keeping with myself . . . a note for Yeats, enclosing a paragraph to be sent to the papers: "Mr. George Moore arrived in Dublin for the performance of *The Countess Cathleen,* but the hissing of the play so shocked his artistic sensibilities that he could not bide another day in Dublin, and went away by the eight o'clock boat." The right thing to do, without a doubt, only I had not done it, and to go away by the eleven o'clock boat from the North Wall would not be quite the same thing. There was an evening boat at eight to consider; it would give me time to see Yeats, with whom I had an appointment, and to find out if there was stuffing enough in Edward to hold out against the scandal that this pamphlet had provoked.

"*The Cross or the Guillotine.* Into what land have I drifted?" and slipping out of bed, I stood in pyjamas for some moments asking myself if a paragraph in the papers announcing my sudden departure would cause Ireland to blush for her disgraceful Catholicism. . . .

But it is difficult to be angry with Ireland on a May morning when the sun is shining, and through clouds slightly more broken than yesterday's, but full of the same gentle, encouraging light—dim, ashen clouds out of which a white edging rose slowly, calling attention to the bright blue, the robe that perhaps noon would wear. All about the square the old brick houses stood sunning themselves, and I could see a chimney-stack steeped in rich shadow, touched with light, and beyond it, and under it, upon an illuminated wall, the direct outline of a gable; and at the end of the streets the mountains appeared, veiled in haze, delicate and refined as *The Countess Cathleen.*

"A town wandering between mountain and sea," I said as I stood before my glass shaving, forgetful of Edward, for below me was Stephen's Green, and it took me back to the beginning of my childhood, to one day when I stole

away, and inspired by an uncontrollable desire to break the monotony of infancy, stripped myself of my clothes, and ran naked in front of my nurse or governess, screaming with delight at the embarrassment I was causing her. She could not take me home along the streets naked, and I had thrown my clothes out of reach into a hawthorn—cap and jacket, shirt and trousers. Since those days the Green had been turned into an ornamental park by a neighbour of mine in Mayo, and given to the public; and telling the hall-porter that if Mr. Yeats called he would find me in the Green, I went out thinking how little the soul of man changes. It declares itself in the beginning, and remains with us to the end. Was this visit to Ireland anything more than a desire to break the monotony of my life by stripping myself of my clothes and running ahead a naked Gael, screaming "Brian Boru!"?

There is no one in the world that amuses one as much as oneself. Whoever is conscious of his acts cannot fail to see life as a comedy and himself as an actor in it; but the faculty of seeing oneself as from afar does not save a man from his destiny. In spite of his foreseeing he is dragged on to the dreaded bourne like an animal, supposing always that animals do not foresee. But a spring morning will not tolerate thought of destiny, and of dreaded bournes. A glow of sunlight catches our cheeks, and we begin to think that life is a perfect gift, and that all things are glad to be alive. Our eyes go to the horse between the shafts; he seems to munch in his nosebag, conscious of the goodness of the day, and the dogs bark gaily and run, delighted with the world, interested in everything. The first thing I saw on entering the Green was a girl loosening her hair to the wind, and following her down a sunny alley, I found myself suddenly by a brimming lake curving like some wonderful calligraphy round a thickly-planted headland, the shadows of some great elms reflected in the water, and the long, young

leaves of the willow sweeping the surface. The span of a stone bridge hastened my steps, and leaning over the parapet I stood enchanted by the view of rough shores thickly wooded, and high rocks down which the water came foaming to linger in a quiet pool. It was pleasant to stand on the bridge and feel the breeze that came rustling by, flowing through me as if I were plant or cloud, and see it turning the leaden surface of the lake to silver. The water-fowl were interesting to watch; many varieties of ducks, green-headed sheldrakes, beautiful, vivacious teal hurried for the bread that the children were throwing, and over them a tumult of gulls passed to and fro; the shapely little black-headed gull, the larger gull whose wings are mauve and whose breast is white, and a herring gull, I think, its dun-coloured porpoise-like body hanging out of great wings. Whither had they come? From their nests among the cliffs of Howth? "Anyhow, they are here, being fed by children and admired by me."

But a drama has begun: a nursemaid rushes forward, a boy is led away screaming; and wondering what the cause of his grief might be, I went in quest of new interests, finding a momentary one in an equestrian statue that ornamented the centre of the Green. There were parterres of flowers about it, and in the shadow people of all ages sat half asleep, half awake, enjoying the spring morning like myself; perhaps more than I did, they being less conscious of their enjoyment.

My mood being sylvan, I sought the forest, and after wandering for some time among the hawthorns, came upon a nook seemingly unknown to anybody but a bee that a sweet scent had tempted out of the hive. The insect was bustling about in the lilac bloom, reminding me that yesterday the crocuses were coming; and though they are ugly flowers, like cheap crockery, it was a sad surprise to find them over, and daffodils nodding in woods

already beginning to smell rooky. And the rooks. How soon they had finished building! Before their eggs were hatched the hyacinths were wasting and the tulips opening—the pale yellow tulip which I admire so much, and the purple tulip which I detest, for it reminds me of an Arab drapery that I once used to see hanging out of a shop in the Rue de Rivoli. But the red tulip with yellow stripes is as beautiful as a Chinese vase, and it is never so beautiful as when it is growing among a bed of forget-me-nots—the tall feudal flower swaying over the lowly forget-me-nots, well named, indeed, for one can easily forget them.

And thinking of Gautier's sonnet, "Moi, je suis la tulipe, une fleur de Hollande," I remembered that lilies would succeed the tulips, and after the lilies would come roses, and then carnations. A woman once told me that all that goes before is a preliminary, a leading-up to the carnation. After them are dahlias, to be sure, and I love them, but the garden is over in September, and the year declines into mist and shortening days and those papery flowers, ugly as the mops with which the coachmen wash carriage-wheels. All the same, this much can be said in praise of the winter months, that they are long, and sorrow with us, but the spring passes by, mocking us, telling us that the flowers return as youthful as last year's, but we . . .

I wandered on, now enchanted by the going and coming of the sun, one moment implanting a delicious warmth between my shoulder-blades, and at the next leaving me cold, forgetful of Yeats until I saw him in his black cloak striding in a green alley, his gait more than ever like a rook's. But the simile that had once amused me began to weary me from repetition, and resolving to banish it from my mind for evermore, I listened to him telling that he had been to Kildare Street Club without finding Edward. Mr. Martyn had gone out earlier than usual that

morning, the hall-porter had said, and I growled out to Yeats:

"Why couldn't he come to see the tulips in the Green instead of bustling off in search of a theologian . . . listening to nonsense in some frowsy presbytery? The sparrows, Yeats! How full of quarrel they are! And now they have all gone away into that thorn-bush!"

By the water's edge we met a willing duck pursued by two drakes—a lover and a moralist. In my good-nature I intervened, for the lover was being hustled off again and again, but mistaking the moralist for the lover, I drove the lover away, and left the moralist, who feeling that he could not give the duck the explanation expected from him, looked extremely vexed and embarrassed.

This little incident seemed to me full of human nature, but Yeats' thoughts were far above nature that morning, and he refused to be interested, even when a boy pinched a nursemaid and she answered his rude question very prettily with—she would be badly off without one.

"The spring-time! The spring-time! Wake up and see it, Yeats," I cried, poking him up with this objection —that before he met the Indian who had taught him metaphysics he used to take pleasure in the otter in the stream, the magpie in the hawthorn and the heron in the marsh, the brown mice in and out of the corn-bin, and the ousel that had her nest in the willow under the bank.

"Your best poems came to you through your eyes. You were never olfactory. I don't remember any poems about flowers or flowering trees. But is there anything, Yeats, in the world more beautiful than a pink hawthorn in flower? For all the world like one of those purfled waistcoats that men wore in the sixteenth century." And then changing the conversation, I told him about an article which I should write, entitled, "The Soul of Edward Martyn," if dear Edward should yield to popular outcry and withdraw *The Countess Cathleen*. "But I wouldn't

be walking about all the morning, Yeats; let us sit on a bench where the breeze comes filled with the scent of the gillyflowers."

"What do you say to coming with me to see one of the old Dublin theatres—a wreck down by the quays? Some say it was a great place once . . . before the Union."

"The ghost of a theatre down by the quays?" I answered.

One does not like to speak of a double self, having so often heard young women say they fear they never can be really in love, because of a second self which spies upon the first, forcing them to see the comic side even when a lover pleads. Yet if I am to give a full account of my visit to Dublin, it seems necessary that I should speak of my self-consciousness, a quality which I share with every human being; but as no two human beings are alike in anything, perhaps my self-consciousness may be different from another's. The reader will be able to judge if this be so when he reads how mine has been a good friend to me all my life, helping me to while away the tediousness of walks taken for health's sake, covering my face with smiles as I go along the streets; many have wondered, and never before have I told the secret of my smiling face. In my walks comedy after comedy rises up in my mind, or I should say scene after scene, for there are empty interspaces between the scenes, in which I play parts that would have suited Charles Mathews excellently well. The dialogue flows along, sparkling like a May morning, quite different from any dialogue I should be likely to find pen in hand, for in my novels I can write only tragedy, and in life play nothing but light comedy, and the one explanation that occurs to me of this dual personality is that I write according to my soul, and act according to my appearance.

The reader will kindly look into his mind, and when the point has been considered he will be in a mood to

take up my book again and to read my story with profit to himself.

These unwritten dialogues are often so brilliant that I stop in my walk to repeat a phrase, making as much of it as Mathews or Wyndham would make, regretting the while that none of my friends is by to hear me. All my friends are actors in these unwritten plays; and almost any event is sufficient for a theme on which I can improvise. But never did Nature furnish me with so rich a theme as she did when Yeats and Edward came to see me in Victoria Street. The subject was apparent to me from the beginning, and the reason given for my having accepted to act with them in the matter of the Irish Literary Theatre (the temptation to have a finger in every literary pie) has to be supplemented. There was another, and a greater temptation—the desire to secure a good part in the comedy which I foresaw, and which had for the last three weeks unrolled itself, scene after scene, exceeding any imagination of mine. Who could have invented the extraordinary rehearsals, Miss Vernon and her psaltery? Or the incident of Yeats' annunciation that Edward had consulted a theologian in London? My anger was not assumed; Yeats told me he never saw a man so angry; how could it be otherwise, ready as I am always to shed the last drop of my blood to defend art? Yet the spectacle of Edward and the theologian heresy-hunting through the pages of Yeats' play was behind my anger always, an irresistible comicality that I should be able to enjoy some day. And then the telegram saying that the sceptre of intelligence had passed from London to Dublin. Who could have invented it? Neither Shakespeare nor Cervantes. Nor could either have invented Yeats' letter speaking of the Elizabethan audiences at the Antient Concert Rooms. The hissing of *The Countess Cathleen* had enraged me as every insult upon art must enrage me—my rage was not factitious; all the same,

when Yeats spoke to me of his arch-enemy the author of the pamphlet *The Cross or the Guillotine,* the West Kensington conspirators and the President of the "Order of the Golden Door" who had expelled the entire society and gone away to Paris, I felt that the comedy was not begotten by any poor human Aristophanes below, but was the invention of the greater Aristophanes above.

We had only just finished the first act of the comedy in which I found myself playing a principal part, and the second act promised to exceed the first, as all second acts should, for I learned from Yeats that *The Cross or the Guillotine* had been sent to Cardinal Logue, and that a pronouncement was expected from him in the evening papers. If Logue's opinion was adverse to the play, Yeats was afraid that Edward would not dare to challenge his authority, he being Primate of all Ireland. Further rumours were current in Dublin that morning—the names of the priests to whom Gill had sent the play; it had gone, so it was said, to a Jesuit of high repute as an educationalist, and to a priest of some literary reputation in England. Yeats wouldn't vouch for the truth of these rumours, but if there were any truth in them he felt sure that Edward would be advised that to stop the play would raise the question whether Catholicism was incompatible with modern literature; and this was a question that no Jesuit would care to raise. The line Yeats said that the pamphlet laid special stress on was: "And smiling, the Almighty condemns the lost." I begged for an explanation, for, as we can only conceive the Almighty as a man in magnitude, we must conceive him as smiling or frowning from his Judgment-seat.

"Frowning, I suppose, would mean that he was angry with those who had disobeyed the commands of his priests, and smiling would mean that he wasn't thinking of priests at all, which, of course, would be very offensive to a majority of the population."

Yeats laughed, but could not be pressed into a theological argument. "You look upon theology, Yeats, as a dead science."

At that he cawed a little—the kindly caw of the jackdaw it was, and I wondered why he was not more angry with Edward and with the priests.

"Ecclesiastical interference is intolerable," I said, trying to rouse him. But if he were indifferent to the fate of his play, if he did not care for literature as much as I thought he did, why was it that he did not notice the spring-time? "Have tulips and nursemaids no part in the Celtic Renaissance? It isn't kind not to look at them; they have come out to be looked at. Do notice the fragrance of the lilacs. Are all of you Irish indifferent to the spring-time? Upon my word, it wouldn't surprise me if the spring forgot one of these days to turn up in Ireland. Yeats, I looked forward to finding Ireland a land of endless enchantment, but so far as I can see at present Ireland isn't bigger than a priest's back."

We passed out of the gates and walked up the sunny pavement; girls were going by in pretty frocks.

"That one, Yeats. How delightful she is in her lavender dress!"

To exaggerate one's ignorance of Dublin seemed to me to be parcel of the character of the returned native, and though I knew well enough that we were walking down Grafton Street, Yeats was asked what street we were in. When he mentioned the name, I told him the name was familiar, but the street was changed, or my memory of it imperfect. For such parade—for parade it was—I have no fault to find with myself, nor for stopping Yeats several times and begging of him to admire the rich shadows that slumbered in the brick entanglements, making an ugly street seem beautiful. But I cannot recall, without frowning disapproval, the fact that I compared the sky at the end of Grafton Street to a beautiful sky

by Corot. The sky I mean rises above yellow sand and walls, blue slates, and iron railings; and these enhance its beauty very much in the same way as the terra-cotta shop fronts in Grafton Street enhanced the loveliness of the pale blue sky that I saw the day I walked down Grafton Street with Yeats. To exalt art above nature has become a platitude; and resolving never to be guilty of this platitude again, I asked Yeats if the grey walls at the end of the street were Trinity College, and standing on my toes insisted on looking through the railings and admiring the greenswards, and the trees, and the cricket-match in progress. Yeats was willing to talk of Trinity, but not to look at it; and though I have no taste, nor much interest in architecture, it was pleasant, even with Yeats, to admire the Provost's House and the ironwork over the gateway, and the beautiful proportions of the courtyard. It was pleasant to allow one's enthusiasm to flow over like a mug of ale at the sight of the front of Trinity, to contrast the curious differences in style that the Bank presented to the College—the College severe and in straight lines, the Bank all in curves.

"The Venus de Milo facing the Antinous," I cried.

Yeats laughed a somewhat chilling approval as is his wont; all the same, he joined me in admiration of the curve of the parapet cutting the sky, the up-springing statues breaking the line and the beautiful pillared porticoes up and down the street, the one in Westmorland Street reminding me of a walk with my father when I was a child of ten. In those times a trade in umbrellas was permitted under the great portico, and though it could interest Yeats nowise, I insisted on telling him that I remembered my father buying an umbrella there, and that my interest in Dublin was wilting for lack of an umbrella stand under the portico. Impossible to interest Yeats in that umbrella my father bought in the 'sixties, he seemed absorbed in some project on the other side of

the street, and when the opposite pavement was reached he began to tell me of a friend of his, a clerk in a lawyer's office who I gathered was a revolutionary of some kind (after business hours), a follower of Miss Gonne. I refused, however, to be interested in Miss Gonne's prophecies or in the mild-eyed clerk on the third landing, who said he would join us on the quays when he had finished drafting a lease.

The quays were delightful that day, and I wished Yeats to agree with me that there is nothing in the world more delightful than to dawdle among seagulls floating to and fro through a pleasant dawdling light.

"But how is it, Yeats, you can only talk in the evening by the fire, that yellow hand dropping over the chair as if seeking a harp of apple-wood?"

Yeats cawed; he could only caw that morning, but he cawed softly, and my thoughts sang so deliciously in my head that I soon began to feel his ideas to be unnecessary to my happiness, and that it did not matter how long the clerk kept us waiting. When he appeared he and Yeats walked on together, and I followed them up an alley discreetly remaining in the rear, fearing that they might be muttering some great revolutionary scheme. I followed them up a staircase full of dust, and found myself to my great surprise in an old library.

"Very like a drawing by Phiz," I said to myself, bowing, for Yeats and the clerk were bowing apologies for our intrusion to twenty or more shabby genteel scholars who sat reading ancient books under immemorial spider webs. At the end of the library there was another staircase, and we ascended, leaving footprints in the dust. We went along a passage, which opened upon a gallery overlooking a theatre, one that I had no difficulty in recognizing as part of the work done in Dublin by the architects that were brought over in the eighteenth century from Italy. The garlands on the ceiling were of Italian

workmanship, the reliefs that remained on the walls. Once the pit was furnished with Chippendale chairs, carved mahogany chairs, perhaps gilded chairs in which ladies in high-bosomed dresses and slippered feet had sat listening to some comedy or tragedy when their lovers were not talking to them; and in those times the two boxes on either side of the stage let out at a guinea or two guineas for the evening.

Once supper-parties were served in them, for Abbey Street is only a few yards from the old Houses of Parliament, and even Grattan may have come to this theatre to meet a lady, whom he kissed after giving her an account of his speech. It amused me to imagine the love-scene, the lady's beauty and Grattan's passion for her, and I wondered what her end might have been, if she had died poor, without money to buy paint for her cheeks or dye for her hair, old, decrepit, and alone like the fair helm-maker who had lived five hundred years ago in France, or the helm-maker who had lived a thousand years ago in Ireland. She, too, had been sought by kings for her sweet breasts, her soft hair, her live mouth and sweet kissing tongue; and she, too, tells how she fell from love's high estate into shameful loves at nightfall in the wind and rain. I looked on the plank benches that were all the furniture of this theatre, I thought of the stevedores, the carters, the bullies and their trulls, eating their suppers, listening the while to some farce or tragedy written nobody knows by whom. Grattan's mistress may have sat among such, eating her bread and onions about eighty years ago. A little later she may have fallen below even the lust of the quays, and in her great want may have written to Grattan some simple letter, and her words were put into my mind. "Dear Henry,—You will be surprised to hear from me after all these years. I am sorry to say that I am in very poor health, and distress. I had to leave a good place last

Christmas, and have not been able to do much since. I thought you might send me a few shillings. If you do I shall be very grateful and will not trouble you again. Send them for old time's sake. Do you know that next year it will be forty years since we met for the first time? Looking over an old newspaper, I saw your speech, and am sending this to the House of Commons. My address is 24 Liffey Street; Mrs. Mulhall, my proper name."

Grattan would read this letter, hurriedly thrusting it into the brown frock-coat with brass buttons which he wore, and that night, and the next day, and for many a week, the phrase of the old light-o'-love: "Do you know that next year it will be forty years since we met for the first time?" would startle him, and would recall a beautiful young girl whom he had met in some promenade, listening to music, walking under trees—the Vauxhall Gardens of Dublin—and he would say, "Now she is old with grey hair and broken teeth," and would wonder what was the good place she had lost last Christmas. He would send her something, or tell somebody to give her a few pounds, and then would think no more of her.

Yeats and the clerk were talking about the rebuilding of the theatre, saying that the outer walls seemed sound enough, but all the rest would have to be rebuilt, and I wandered round the gallery wondering what were Yeats' dreams while looking into the broken decorations and the faded paint. Plays were still acted in this bygone theatre. But what plays? And who were the mummers that came to play them?

As if in answer, a man and two women came on the stage. I heard their voices, happily not the words they were speaking, for at the bottom of my heart a suspicion lingered that it might be *The Colleen Bawn* they were rehearsing, and not to hear that this was so I moved up the gallery and joined Yeats, saying that we had been

among dust and gloom long enough, that I detected drains, and would like to get back into the open air.

We moved out of the theatre, Yeats still talking to the clerk about the price of the building, telling him that the proprietor must never know from whom the offer came; for if he were to hear that there was a project on foot for the establishment of an Irish Literary Theatre his price would go up fifty per cent. The clerk muttered something about a hundred per cent. "And if he were to hear that Mr. Edward Martyn was at the back of it——" Yeats muttered. The clerk interjected that if he were to hear that it would be hard to say what price he would not be putting upon his old walls.

A dried-up, dusty fellow was the clerk, a man about fifty, and I wondered what manner of revolution it might be that he was supposed to be stirring, and how deep was his belief that Maud Gonne would prove herself to be an Irish Joan of Arc; not very much deeper than Yeats' belief that he would one day become possessed of a theatre in Dublin and produce literary plays in it for a people unendowed with any literary sense whatever. Yet they continued shepherding their dreams up the quays, just as if *The Countess Cathleen* had not been hissed the night before, as if Cardinal Logue were not about to publish an interdiction, as if Edward were one that could be recovered from ecclesiasticism.

It is an old philosophy to say that the external world has no existence except in our own minds, and that day on the quays my experience seemed to bear witness to the truth of the old adage. The houses on the other side, the quays themselves, the gulls floating between the bridges, everything seemed to have put off its habitual reality, to have sloughed it, and to have acquired another —a reality that we meet in dreams; and connecting the external world with the fanciful projects that I heard discussed with so much animation at my elbow, I began

to ask myself if I were the victim of an hallucination. Had I come over to Ireland? Else surely Ireland had lost her reality? The problem was an interesting one, and getting it well before me, I began to consider if it might be that through excessive indulgence in dreams for over a hundred years the people had at last dreamed themselves and Ireland away. And this was a possibility that engaged my thoughts as we crossed Carlisle Bridge. I put it to myself in this way: reality can destroy the dream, why shouldn't the dream be able to destroy reality? And I continued to ponder the theory that had been accidentally vouchsafed to me until the clerk left us, and Yeats said:

"Even if it should happen that Edward should stop the performances (I don't think he will), the Irish literary movement will go on."

"It's extraordinary what conviction they can put into their dreams," I thought, and we walked on in silence, for in spite of myself Yeats' words had revealed to me a courage and a steadfastness in his character that I had not suspected. "There is more stuffing in him than I thought for, and I shouldn't be surprised if he carried something through. What that will be, and how he will carry it, it is impossible to form any idea."

Stopping suddenly, he told me that T. P. Gill, the editor of the *Daily Express,* expected me to lunch, and he was anxious I should meet him, for he was one of the leaders of the movement; an excellent journalist, he said, who had been editing the paper with great brilliancy ever since he and Horace Plunkett had changed it from an organ of mouldering Unionism into one interested in the new Ireland.

Somebody—Gill, perhaps—had been kind enough to send me the *Express* during the winter, and I used to read it, thinking it even more unworldly than any of the little reviews of my youth edited by Parnassians and

Realists. All the winter I had read in it stories of the Celtic gods—Angus, Dana and Lir intermingled with controversies between Yeats and John Eglinton regarding the literary value of national legend in modern literature; and when the Irish Literary Theatre was spoken of, the *Express* seemed to have discovered its mission—the advancement of Celtic drama. Angus and Lir were lifted out of, and Yeats and Edward lifted into their thrones; and on the Saturday before the arrival of the company in Dublin the *Express* had printed short but succinct biographies of the actors and actresses whom I had picked up in the casual Strand. If the entire Comédie Française had come over with plays by Racine and Victor Hugo, not the old plays, but new ones lately discovered, which had not yet been acted, the *Express* could not have displayed more literary enthusiasm. A newspaper so confused and disparate that I had never been able to imagine what manner of man its editor might be. A tall, dark, and thin man with feverish, restless hands and exalted diction whenever he spoke, was dismissed for a short, square, and thick-set man like a bulldog, with great melancholy eyes, and he in turn was dismissed for a stout, elderly man with spectacles, very commonplace and polite, speaking little, and not interested at all in literature or in theosophy, but something quite different, and I had often sat thinking what this might be, without being able to satisfy myself, getting up from my chair at last, saying that only Balzac could solve the problem; only he could imagine the inevitable personality of the editor of the *Daily Express*.

He would have foreseen that the editor of this extraordinary sheet wore a Henri Quatre beard; whereas the beard, the smile, the courtesy, the flow of affable conversation, were a surprise to me, Balzac would have foreseen the wife and children, and their different appearances and personalities; whereas I had always

imagined the editor of the *Express* a bachelor. Balzac would have divined the family man in his every instinct, despite the round white brows shaded by light hair, curling prettily; despite the eyes—the word that comes to the pen is "furtive," but for some reason, perhaps from repetition, the expression "furtive eyes" has come to mean very little. Gill's eyes seem to follow a dream and then they suddenly return, and he watches his listener, evidently curious to know what effect he is producing upon him, and then the eyes wander away again in pursuit of the dream. The coming and going of his eyes interested me until the nose caught my attention—a large one with a high bridge, and with those clean-cut nostrils without which every nose is ugly. But the nose is said to be an index of character, telling of resolution; and the hand, too, is said to be a tell-tale feature: I noticed that Gill's hands were small and white, with somewhat crooked and ill-shapen nails. A hand of languid movement—one that went to the beard, caressing it constantly, reminding one of a cat licking its fur, with this difference, however, that a cat is silent while it licks itself, whereas Gill could talk while he dallied with his beard.

It has been said, too, that a man's character transpires in his dress, and Gill was carefully dressed. His shirt-collar looked more like London than Dublin washing, and I asked myself if his washing went to London while I admired the carefully-chosen necktie and the pin. The grey suit fitted his shoulders so well that I decided he must have gone back and forwards a good many times to try on, and then that he did not give his tailor much trouble, for his figure was well-knit, square shoulders, clean-cut flanks. "A delicate man withal," said the hollow chest, and I remembered that Yeats had told me that last winter Gill had been obliged to go abroad in search of health.

We were not altogether strangers, as he reminded me —he had had the pleasure of meeting me in London. We had been fellow-workers on the *Speaker,* and so it gave him much pleasure to see me in Ireland.

"I'm afraid that Ireland doesn't want either Yeats or me," I growled out; and this remark carried us right into the middle of the controversy regarding *The Countess Cathleen.* When he was in London Martyn had spoken to him on the subject, and had told him that a learned theologian had been consulted and that the incident of the crucifix kicked about the stage by the starving peasantry had been cut out.

"I don't remember the incident you speak of. Martyn insisted on its omission, you say?"

Without answering me, Gill continued, speaking very slowly, hesitating between his words. He seemed to take pleasure in hearing himself talk, and this seemed strange to me, for he was saying nothing of importance, merely that the subject of the play was calculated to wound the religious susceptibilities of the Irish people; and while stroking his beard he continued to speak of the famine times and of the proselytizing by the Protestants: memories like these were too deep to be washed away by mere poetry, though, indeed, he would yield to nobody in his admiration of Yeats' poetry; and if Yeats had consulted him regarding the choice of a subject for a play, he certainly would not have advised him to choose *The Countess Cathleen.* All the same, he had done all that he possibly could do for the Irish Literary Theatre, as I must have seen by his paper. He had even done more than what had appeared in the paper, for he had, himself, sent *The Countess Cathleen* to two priests, and placing himself in the light of a wise mediator, he told me that both these priests had given their verdict in favour of the play. One of them, a Jesuit of considerable attainments, had pointed out that the lan-

guage objected to was put into the mouths of demons.

"Who could not be expected to say altogether kind things of their Creator," I interjected.

Gill laughed, and his laughter seemed to reveal a temperament that ripples, pleasantly murmuring, over shallows, never sinking into a deep pool or falling from any great height. "A pleasant stream," I said to myself, "only I wish it would flow a little faster." The opposition to *The Countess Cathleen* in the Antient Concert Rooms was no doubt regrettable, but I must not judge Ireland too harshly. The famine times were remembered in Ireland; and I had lived too long out of Ireland to sympathize with the people on this point. Yeats had lived more in Ireland; but he, too, was liable to misjudge Ireland, being a Protestant. Gill felt that there was an Ireland in Ireland that Protestants could not understand, and he repeated that if Yeats had come to him in the first instance he certainly would have advised him to choose another subject. When Parnell consulted him at the time of the split—"I begin to be interested," I said to myself, and wondering what advice Gill had given to Parnell, all my attention was strained to hear. The fault was mine, no doubt, but at the supreme moment Gill's words and voice began to ripple vaguely, like the stream, and I heard that if a great Liberal newspaper had existed then (he used the word "Liberal" in its broadest sense), it would have been possible to arrive at some compromise between Parnell and the party, and himself would have gone to the prelates, and knowing Ireland as well as he did, he thought that the situation might have been saved. The present situation might be saved if somebody came forward and gave Ireland a newspaper, a newspaper *bien entendu,* that would give expression to all the different minds now working in Ireland. He was doing this in the *Express,* in a small way, for his enterprise was checked by lack of capital. All the same, he had managed

to bring more culture into the *Express* than had ever entered into it before—John Eglinton, Æ, Yeats. Under his direction the *Express* was the first paper that had attempted to realize that Ireland had an æsthetic spirit of her own.

"This is true," I said to myself, and I lent to Gill an attentive ear, thinking he was interested in art; but he glided away from my questions, passing into an account of the co-operative movement, apparently as much interested in dairies as in statues; and for an hour I listened to his slumbrous talk until at last it seemed to me that a firkin rolled out of the door of one of the dairies, and that I could see a dainty little man fixed upon it for ever, a sort of petrifaction having taken place, a statue upon butter or——

My reverie was broken by Gill, who questioned me regarding my first impressions of Dublin, if I would be kind enough to write them out for him, and if not, he was interested to hear them for his own pleasure. On the subject of Dublin the leader of the Renaissance seemed to hold far-reaching views. He knew Paris well, and feeling that the conversation would be agreeable to me, he spoke of the immense benefit of the work that Baron Haussmann had done there; and then, as if spurred by a sense of rivalry, he described the great boulevards he would cut through Dublin if he were entrusted with the dictatorship of Ireland for fifteen years. Nor was this all. The University question could be dealt with, and the Home Rule question to the satisfaction of all parties. It seemed to me that I had come upon the original fount of all wisdom; it flowed from him in a slow but continual stream, bearing along in its current different schemes; one, I remember, was for the construction of a new bank, for the bankers would have to be housed when they were turned out of the old House of Parliament. He talked on, thinking that I was interested in himself; whereas I

was thinking whether his father was Balzac or Tourguenieff, and perhaps this point might never have been decided if he had not suddenly begun to talk about Trinity College, saying there was a wider and more Bohemian culture, one to which he would like to give effect.

"By means of the newspaper you were speaking of just now?"

The newspaper would be necessary, but a café was necessary too. A café was Continental, and the new Dublin should model itself more upon Continental than British ideas; and we talked on, discussing the effect of the café on the intellectual life in Dublin. The café would be useless unless it remained open until two in the morning. A short Act of Parliament might easily be introduced, and the best site would be the corner of Grafton Street and the Green. The site, however, had this disadvantage —it would go to make Stephen's Green the centre of Dublin, and this was not desirable. The old centre of Dublin, which was in the north, should be restored to its former prosperity. Another café might be established on the quays, an excellent site were it not for the Liffey. I mentioned that I had only seen the river when the tide was up, and Gill told me that when it was out the smell was not pleasant. The new drainage, however, would soon be completed, and a café could be opened at the corner of O'Connell Street, but for the moment the corner of Grafton Street seemed the more practical site.

A question regarding the probable cost of the café brought a slight cloud into his face, but it vanished quickly as soon as he had stroked his beard, and he spoke to me at a great length about a man whom he had met in America, and with whom he had become great friends. This man was a millionaire, and his ambition was to build hotels in Ireland, whether for the sake of adding to his millions, or diminishing them for the sake of Ireland,

Gill did not know. Probably his friend was influenced by both reasons, for, of course, to found hotels that did not pay some dividend would be of no benefit to anybody. Gill continued to talk of possible dividends, and I listened to them with difficulty, for my curiosity was now keen to hear from him the reciprocation of the millionaire in the building of hotels and the founding of a real Parisian café at the corner of Stephen's Green and Grafton Street, and I waited almost breathless for the answer to this conundrum. It was simple enough when it came. After the building of the hotels a great deal of money would remain over, and with this money the millionaire would build the café.

"There isn't a drop of Balzac blood in him," I said to myself; "he is pure Tourguenieff, and perhaps Ireland is a little Russia in which the longest way round is always the shortest way home, and the means more important than the end."

Two or three young men who wrote in the *Express* every night had been invited to come to take coffee with us after lunch, and their arrival was a relief to both Gill and myself. We had been talking of Ireland for several hours, and Gill had begun to speak of the time when he would have to go down to the office. The young men, too, wished to speak to him about what they were to write that evening, for Gill explained that he did not write very much himself in his newspaper; his notion of editing was to pump ideas into people; and after listening for some time I got up to go. It was then that Gill told me that the newspaper of which he was the editor was offering a great dinner at the Shelbourne Hotel to the Irish Literary Theatre, and he hoped that I would be present.

On this we parted, and a few moments afterwards I found myself lost in Nassau Street, for Nature has denied me all sense of topography, and while looking up and down the street wondering how I should get to Mer-

rion Square, I caught sight of Yeats coming out of a bun-shop. By calling wildly I succeeded in awakening him from his reverie. He stopped, and in answer to my question told me that he had been to Edward's club; but Edward was not there. "With one of his theologians, no doubt, both deep in your heresies," I said, and we walked on in silence until a newsboy posted his placard against some railings, and we read: "Letter from Cardinal Logue condemning *The Countess Cathleen.*"

Yeats pointed, saying, "There's Edward," and I saw him in his short black jacket and voluminous grey trousers reading the newspaper at the kerb.

"There will be no plays to-night!" we cried.

His glasses dropped from his high nose, but he caught them as they fell.

"You haven't seen Logue's letter then? He admits that he hasn't read the play; he has only judged it by extracts. And you can't judge a work by extracts."

"Besides," I said, "the two priests to whom the play was sent have decided in its favour. Gill told me that he showed you some letters from them."

"As well as I remember he showed me——"

"But, my dear friend, you must know whether he showed you a letter or not."

"Yes, I'm practically sure that I saw a letter, but I'm not affected by stray opinions, whether they are in favour of the play or against it."

"You may not have sent the play to two priests, but you brought it to a theologian."

"That was in England."

"Of course you were then in a Protestant country. And did he decide in favour of the play?"

"No, he didn't. Very much the other way."

Edward's sense of humour does not desert him even when he fears that his soul may be grilled; and he enter-

tained us with an account of the evening he had spent with the theologian.

"I had to bite my lips to prevent myself from laughing when he climbed up the steps of a ladder, taking down tomes, and he descended step by step very carefully, for he is an old man, and putting the tome under the lamp——"

"He read aloud the best opinions on the subject. It was like going to a lawyer. Blackstone writes according to So-and-so Vic. Who was this theologian?"

Edward refused to give up his name, and I could not guess it, although he allowed me many guesses.

"Somebody you never heard of."

"Then I am to understand the plays will go on as usual?"

"I see no reason why not. The Cardinal hasn't read the play; he has put himself out of court."

"But if he had read the play, Edward, and had interdicted it?"

"An interdiction would be quite another matter. I'm not obliged to accept stray opinions, but an interdiction would be very serious. It would be a very serious matter for me to persist in supporting a play that the head of the Church in Ireland deemed harmful!"

I suggested that Dr. Walshe was a sufficient authority in his own diocese.

"There's that, too, and I wouldn't be surprised if Walshe said some of those sharp things that ecclesiastics can, on occasion, say about each other."

"What enrages me," I said, turning to Yeats, "is the insult offered to mankind by this Cardinal. But you don't seem interested, Yeats. I can't understand why you are so little interested in the general question, apart from the particular."

"I am interested; but the matter isn't so serious as you

think. I know Ireland better than you, and am more patient."

Yeats' words appeased me, and without knowing it my thoughts were drawn away from the peasant Cardinal to the spring weather, and I relinquished myself to the delight of the warm air, to the beauty of the sunlight among the flowering trees, to the sky, so blue, so ecstatic, lifting the heart to rapture; and knowing how interested Edward always is in architecture, and feeling he needed a little compensation for the courage he had shown, I called his attention to a piece of monumented wall, designed to conceal the rear of a gardener's cottage, but a beautiful thing in itself, and adding to the beauty of the square.

Two curving wings, an arched recess, vases and terra-cotta plaques—very eighteenth-century, a century to which Edward has never been able to extend his sympathy, calling it with some truth a century of boudoirs, and its genius the decoration of an alcove. His sympathies flow out more naturally to the cathedral, to the monastery, and to the palace, never very generously to the dwelling-house.

"You've always said, my dear friend, that you understand public life much better than private."

Edward is always willing to discuss his ideas, but for the moment he was taken with the beauty of the monumented wall.

"As a screen," he said, "it is beautiful, but the sixteenth century would have built——"

"Built a cottage that would have been beautiful all the way round? No, it wouldn't. As I have said, you've never understood the eighteenth century, Edward, and your misunderstanding is quite natural; a century of feminine intrigue, subtle women interested in the arts and in delightful abbés, who visited artists in their studios, drawing attention to the points of their female models. In the

sixteenth century Roman priests no longer spoke of their sons as their nephews, and went into the church laughing at the Mass they were going to celebrate. A sixteenth-century Cardinal would have been highly amused at the thought of condemning a beautiful play because the writer spoke of the Almighty smiling as He condemned the lost. He would have said, 'But if the line is beautiful?' and taking Logue by the arm, he would have told him that religion is interesting until we are twenty. After that it becomes a means to an end, and the mission of every Cardinal should be to find a mistress who would respect his nerves, and to collect some passable pictures. My dear friends, how you have duped me! Do you remember what you told me about the Celtic Renaissance? Poets and painters burgeoning on every bush."

I laid a hand on Edward's shoulder and another on Yeats', and looked into their faces.

"Now, Edward——"

"Well, all I can say is the Irish people liked my play, and it wouldn't have been listened to in London . . . any more than Ibsen is."

"And what about Yeats?"

"His would have been listened to if he had not put things into it which shocked people's feelings. I know there are many calling themselves Christians who are only Christians in name, but it is very hurtful for those who really believe to have to listen to lines . . ." And Edward stopped, fearing to wound Yeats' feelings.

He bade us good-bye soon after. "Perhaps he is going to Vespers," I said. "A good fellow—an excellent one, and a man who would have written well if his mother hadn't put it into his head that he had a soul. The soul is a veritable pitfall. I'm afraid, Yeats, you'll find it difficult to persuade him to buy the theatre for you. He would live in terror lest you should let him in for some heresy."

CHAP. IV.

I READ an historic entertainment in the appearance of the waiters; they were more clean and spruce and watchful than usual; the best shirts had been ordered from the laundry, every button-hole held its stud, shoes had been blacked scrupulously; and the head-waiter, a tall, thin man, confident in his responsibilities, pointed out the way to the cloak-room, and in subdued voice told us that we should find Mr. Gill in the ante-room.

And we found him receiving his guests, blithe and alert as a bird in the spring-time. All his seriousness had vanished from him, he stroked his beard and he laughed, and his eye brightened as he told of his successes . . . the extreme ends of Dublin had yielded to his persuasiveness, and under the same roof-tree that night Trinity College and the Gaelic League would dine together. Hyde was coming, and John O'Leary, the Fenian leader, was over yonder. And looking through the evening coats and shirt-fronts, I caught sight of the patriarchal beard that had bored me years ago in Paris, for John would talk about Ireland when I wanted to talk about Ingres and Cabanel. All the same I went to him, and he angered me for the last time by asking for news of Marshall, my friend in the *Confessions,* instead of speaking to me about the Gaelic literary movement. "As tedious as ever," I said, escaping from him; and seeing nobody who might amuse me, I returned to Gill to reproach him for not having asked his guests to bring their females with them.

At these public repasts women's necks and arms are indispensable, strings of pearls, bracelets, gowns. We can dispense with sex only when we are among three or four intelligences—the eternal masculine carries one up into the ether or draws one into shabby observation of his appearance. In a provincial town he arrives at a banquet

in a pot-hat and muffler, still thinking of the wife at home and the children that were sent to bed before papa started forth.

"Not an opera hat among the company," I muttered, "and no one should be seen without one"; and lowering my eyes, I noticed that I was among a still deeper disgrace. Some of the men had not taken the trouble to change their shoes. "Perhaps they haven't even changed their socks," and to pass the time away I began to wonder how it was that women could take any faint interest in men. Every kind seemed present: men with bellies and without, men with hair on their heads, bald men, short-legged men and long-legged men; but looking up and down the long tables, I could not find one that might inspire passion in a woman; no one even looked as if he would like to do such a thing. And with this sad thought in my head I sought for my chair, and found it next to a bald, obese professor, with Yeats on the other side, next to Gill, at the head of the table. It is always nice to see dear Edward, and he was not far away, on Gill's left hand, as happy as a priest at a wedding. He sat, chewing his cud of happiness; a twig from *The Heather Field,* slightly triumphant, I thought, over Yeats, whose *Countess Cathleen* had not been received quite so favourably.

Beside me, on my right, was a young man, clean-shaven and demure; the upper lip was long, but the nose and eyes and forehead were delicately cut, like a cameo, and his bright auburn hair was brushed over his white forehead, making a line that a girl might have envied if she were inclined to that style of *coiffure.* He answered my questions, but he answered them somewhat dryly. Yeats would not speak, but sat all profile, like a drawing on an Egyptian monument, thinking his speech; and it was not until we had eaten the soup and the fish, and a glass of champagne had been drunk, that I discovered the young

man at my right elbow to be full of information about the people present.

" The very person," I said, " I stand in need of. And that is why Gill put him next to me." So I began to speak of our host, of his kind and genial nature. My young friend knew him (he was one of the writers on the *Express*), and seemed to be much amused at my story of Gill's plan to introduce Continental culture into Dublin. As we talked of Gill our eyes went towards him, and we admired in silence, thinking how like he was to some portraits we had seen in the Louvre, or in the National Gallery—we were not sure which.

" Bellini, I think."

My young friend had some knowledge of the art of painting, for he corrected me, saying that Giorgione was the first designer of that round brow, shaded by pretty curling hair.

" I believe you're right," I said. " It was he who started the fashion for a certain wisdom which Gill seems to have caught admirably, and which, though enhanced by, is not dependent upon the beauty of a blond and highly-trimmed beard."

" Did you see a portrait of Gill done before he grew his beard? "

I answered that I had not seen it, surprised a little by the question. My young friend smiled.

" He rarely shows that photograph now. Perhaps he has destroyed it."

" But at what are you smiling? "

" Well, you see," he answered, " Gill was nothing before he grew his beard. His face is so thin, and falls away at the chin so quickly, that no one credited him with any deep and commanding intelligence."

" The round, prettily-drawn eyes have nothing to recommend them. One couldn't call them crafty eyes."

My young friend smiled, but as I was about to ask

him why he was smiling, Gill addressed some remarks to me over Yeats' head, disturbing, I feared, some wondrous array of imagery collecting in the poet's mind. The professor I had perforce to fall back upon, and I succeeded in engaging his attention with a remark regarding Tennyson's proneness to write the sentiment of his time rather than the ideas of all time.

"But his language is always so exquisite. You must know the line—something you know: 'Doves murmuring in immemorial elms,' not since Milton, and I am not sure that I don't prefer Tennyson's imagery, excepting that immortal line: 'Blazed in the forehead of the morning sky.' Give me," said the professor, "the sublime diction. You can have all the rest—the sentiments, the ideas, the thoughts . . . all. You remember that wonderful line when he addresses Virgil, that . . . that . . ." (I waited for the rare adjective) "that excellent line." The waiter interposed a bottle between us. "This excellent wine goes very well with the entrée." He was then called into the conversation which Gill was holding with Edward, regarding the necessity of founding a school of acting, and I found myself free to return to the young gentleman on my right.

"You mentioned just now that Gill's beard was the origin of Gill."

Lowering his voice, my young neighbour said:

"I'm afraid the story is difficult to tell here."

"Nobody is listening; everybody is engaged in different conversations."

"Gill is not very strong, and has often to go away in quest of health. It was in Paris that it happened."

We were interrupted many times by the waiters and our neighbours, seeing that we were amused, sought to share our amusement. All the same, the young man succeeded in telling me how, at the end of a long convalescence, Gill had entered a barber's shop, his beard

neglected, growing in patches, thicker on one side of the face than on the other. He fell wearily into a chair, murmuring, " La barbe," and exhausted by illness and the heat of the saloon, he did not notice for some time that no one had come to attend upon him. The silence at last awoke him out of the lethargy or light doze into which he had slipped, and looking round it seemed to him that his dream had come true; that the barber had gone: that he was alone, for some reason unaccountable, in the shop. A little alarmed he turned in his chair, and for a moment could find nobody. The barber had retreated to the steps leading to the ladies' saloon, whence he could study his customer intently, as a painter might a picture. As Gill was about to speak the barber struck his brow, saying, " Style Henri Quatre," and drew his scissors from the pocket of his apron.

Gill does not remember experiencing any particular emotion while his beard was being trimmed. It was not until the barber gave him the glass that he felt the sudden transformation—felt rather than saw, for the transformation effected in his face was little compared with that which had happened in his soul. In the beginning was the beard, and the beard was with God, who in this case happened to be a barber; and glory be to the Lord and to his shears that a statesman of the Renaissance walked that day up the Champs Elysées, his thoughts turning—and we think not unnaturally—towards Machiavelli. A Catholic Machiavelli is not possible, nor an Alexander the Sixth, a Cæsar Borgia, nor a Julius the Second; but if one is possessed of the sense of compromise, difficulties can be removed, and Gill's alembicated mind soon discovered that it was possible to conceive Machiavelli with all that great statesman's bad qualities removed and the good retained. As he walked it seemed to him all the learning of his time had sprung up in him. He found himself like the great

men of the sixteenth century, well versed in the arts of war and peace, a patron of the arts and sciences.

But at that moment reality thrust itself forward, shattering his dream. Gill had been an active Nationalist—that is to say, he had driven about the country on outside cars, occasionally stopping at cross-roads to tell little boys to throw stones at the police; in other words, he had been a campaigner, and had felt that he was serving his country by being one. But since he had set eyes on his new beard the conviction quickened in him that he would be able to serve his country much better by dispensing his prodigal wisdom than by engaging in the rough-and-tumble fights of party politics. The inside of gaols were well enough for such simple minds as Davitt and O'Brien, but not for a mind grown from a Henri Quatre beard; and remembering the celebrated saying of him who had worn the beard four hundred years ago—*Paris vaut bien une messe*—Gill muttered in his beard, *"Ma barbe vaut mieux que le plan."*

About the time of Gill's beard Horace Plunkett was engaged in laying the foundations of what he believed to be a great social reformation in Ireland. But Plunkett, Gill reflected as he walked gaily, with an alert step and brightening eye, did not know Ireland. A Protestant can never know Ireland intimately. Such was Gill's conviction, and there was the still deeper conviction that he was the only man who could advise Plunkett, and save him from the many pitfalls into which he was sure to tumble. All that Plunkett required was something of the genial spirit of the Renaissance. Again beguiled by the delicious temptation, Gill paused in his walk. Plunkett could not associate himself with one who had been engaged in the Plan of Campaign. The Plan had faded with the trimming of his beard; and he could hardly believe that he had been connected with it, except, indeed, as a romantic incident in his career. The only difficulty

—if it were a difficulty—was to find a means of explaining his repudiation of the Plan satisfactorily. The Irish atmosphere is dense, and to tell the people that it had all gone away with the shaggy ends of his beard would hardly satisfy them. But in Ireland there is always Our Holy Mother the Church, and the Church had quite lately condemned the Plan. Gill is a faithful son of the Church. Of course, of course. The error into which he had fallen had gone with the shaggy beard, and with his trimmed beard, and his trimmed soul, Gill appeared in Dublin henceforth known to his friends as "Tom the Trimmer."

"An excellent story that probably started from some remark of Gill's, and was developed as it passed from mouth to mouth. A piece of folk. If a story be told three or four times by different people it becomes folk. You have, no doubt, stories of the same kind about everybody?"

This last remark was injudicious, for I seemed to frighten my neighbour, and I had some difficulty in tempting him into gossip again.

"Are there any other contributors to the *Express* present?"

"Yes," he said, yielding again to his temptation to talk. "T. W. Rolleston. Do you see that handsome man a head above everybody else, sitting a little way down the table?"

"Yes," I said. "And what a splendid head and shoulders! Byron said he would give many a poem for Southey's, and Southey's were not finer than that man's."

As if guessing that somebody was admiring him, Rolleston looked down the table, and I saw how little back there was to his head.

"He lacks something," my neighbour said; and I was told how Rolleston came down every evening to write his leader in a great cloak and in leggings if it were

raining, bringing with him his own pens and ink and blotting-pad, all the paraphernalia of his literature.

"A man like that writing leaders!" I said. "Nothing short of an Odyssey, one would have thought——"

"So many people did think. He was a great scholar at Trinity, and in Germany he translated, or helped to translate, Walt Whitman into German. When he came back the prophet, the old man, John O'Leary, whom you told me you knew in France, the ancient beard at the end of the room, accepted him as Parnell's successor."

"And now he is writing leaders for the *Express!* How did the transformation happen?"

"O'Grady tells a story——"

"Who is O'Grady?" I asked, enjoying the gossip hugely; and my neighbour drew my attention to a grey, round-headed man, and after looking at him for some time I said: "How lonely he seems among all these people! Does he know nobody? Or is he very unpopular?"

"He is very little read, but we all admire him. He is our past"; and my neighbour told me that O'Grady had written passages that for fiery eloquence and energy were equal to any that I would find in Anglo-Irish literature. "Only——"

"Only what?" I asked.

And he told me that O'Grady's talent reminded him of the shaft of a beautiful column rising from amid rubble-heaps. After a pause, during which we mused on the melancholy spectacle, I said:

"Rolleston—you were going to tell me about Rolleston."

"O'Grady tells that he found Rolleston a West Briton, but after a few lessons in Irish history Rolleston donned a long black cloak and a slouch hat, and attended meetings, speaking in favour of secret societies, persuading John O'Leary to look upon him as one that might rouse the country, 'going much further than I had ever

dreamed of going,' O'Grady said. 'His extreme views frightened me a little, but when I met him next time and began to speak to him about the holy Protestant Empire, he read me a paper on Imperialism.'"

"And when did that happen?"

"About ten years ago, a Messiah that punctured while the others were going by on inflated tyres . . . poor Rolleston punctured ten years ago."

"The others hoot at him as they go by." And we talked of Messiahs, going back and back until we arrived at last at Krishna, the second person of the Hindoo Trinity, whose crucifixion, it is related, happened between heaven and earth.

"Two beautiful poems and a great deal of scholarship which he doesn't know what to do with. How very sad!" And looking at him, I said: "A noble head and shoulders. What a good tutor he would make if I had children!"

So from one remark to another I was led into saying spiteful things about men whom I did not know, and who were destined afterwards to become my friends.

"Tell me about some of your other contributors—about the professor who writes Latin and Greek verses as well as he writes English. He reviews books for you, doesn't he?"

"Yes; but I beg of you to speak a little lower, or he'll hear you."

"No, no; he's talking with Gill and Yeats."

"Gill is terrified," my young friend said, "lest Yeats should speak disrespectfully of Trinity College. He has taken a great deal of trouble about this dinner, and believes that it will unite the country in a common policy if Yeats doesn't split it up on him again."

At that moment the professor turned to me, and asked me to lunch the following day at Trinity, impressing upon me the necessity of coming down a little early, in time to

have just a glass of wine before lunch. His doctor had forbidden him all stimulants in the morning, and by stimulants he understood whisky. But a bottle of wine, he said, was a tenuous thing, and he would like to avail himself of my visit to Dublin to drink one with me. I could see that we had now struck upon his interest in life, and with a show of interest which he had not manifested in Virgil's poetry, he said:

"Just a glass of Marsala, the ancient Lilybaum. You know, the grape is so abundant there that they never think of mixing it with bad brandy."

At that moment somebody spoke to me, and when I had answered a few questions I heard the professor saying that he had gone down for lunch to some restaurant. "Nothing much to-day, John. Just a dozen of oysters and a few cutlets, and a quart of that excellent ale."

Again my attention was distracted by a waiter pressing some ice-pudding upon me, and I lost a good deal of information regarding the professor's arduous day. As soon, however, as I had helped myself I heard a story, whether it related to yesterday or some previous time I cannot say.

"After that I had nothing at all, until something brought me to the cupboard, and there, behold! I found a bottle of lager. 'Smith has been remiss. He has mixed the Bass and the lager.' But no. They were all full, twelve bottles of Bass and only one of lager; so I took it, as it seemed a stray and lonely thing."

It appears that the professor then continued his annotations of Aristophanes until the light began to fade.

"I thought of calling again on Lilybaum. Really, the more I drink of it the more honest and excellent I find it." When the bottle was finished it was time to return home to dinner, and I learned that the professor's abstinence was rewarded by the delight he took in the first whisky and soda after dinner.

"An excellent old pagan he seems to be, Quintus Horatius Flaccus of Dublin, untroubled by any Messianic idea. Now Hyde—I've heard a good deal about him. Can you point him out to me?"

As my neighbour was about to do so Gill rose up at the head of the table.

"Speech time has come," I said.

Gill read a letter from W. E. H. Lecky, who regretted that he was prevented from being present at the dinner, and then went on to say that the other letter was from a gentleman whose absence he was sure was greatly regretted. He alluded to his friend, Mr. Horace Plunkett, who was, if he might be allowed to say so, one of the truest and noblest sons that Ireland had ever begotten.

"I've noticed," I said to my young friend, "even within the few days I have been in Ireland, that Ireland is spoken of, not as a geographical, but a sort of human entity. You are all working for Ireland, and I hear now that Ireland begets you; a sort of Wotan who goes about——"

Somebody looked in our direction, somebody said "Hush!" And Gill continued, saying they had had an exciting week in Ireland, one that would be memorable in the history of the country. For the first time Ireland had been profoundly stirred upon the intellectual question. He said he regarded the controversy which Yeats' play had aroused as one of the best signs of the times. It showed that they had reached at last the end of the intellectual stagnation of Ireland, and that, so to speak, the grey matter of Ireland's brain was at last becoming active.

"Ireland's brain! Just now it was the loins of Ireland."

Gill flowed along in platitudes and stereotyped sentences that evidently had a depressing effect upon Yeats, who seemed to sink further and further into himself, and

was at last no longer able to raise his head. Gill talked on all the same. He for one had always regarded Yeats broadly, as one who held the sword of spirit in his hand, and waged war upon the gross host of materialism, and as an Irishman of genius who had devoted a noble enthusiasm to honouring his country by the production of beautiful work. . . . What should he say of Mr. Martyn? There was no controversy about him. Their minds were not occupied by controversy, but with that which must be gratifying to Mr. Martyn and to all of them—the knowledge that he had produced a great and original play, and that Ireland had discovered in him a dramatist fitted to take rank among the first in Europe.

I think everybody present thought this eulogy a little exaggerated, for I noticed that everybody hung down his head and looked into his plate, everybody except Edward, who stared down the room unabashed, which, indeed, was the only thing for him to do, for it is better when a writer is praised that he should accept the praise loftily than that he should attempt to excuse himself, a mistake that I fell into at the St. James's Theatre.

Gill continued in the same high key. This gathering of Irishmen, which he thought he might say was representative of the intellect of Dublin, and included men of the utmost differences of opinion on every question which now divided Irishmen, was, to his mind, a symbol of what they were moving towards in his country. He thought they had now reached the stage at which they had begun to recognize the profundity of the saying:

> The mills of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small.

Yet all felt, instinctively now, that the time for the reconstruction of Ireland had begun. They stood among the débris of old society and felt that out of the ruins they were called upon to build a new Ireland. No matter

what their different opinions on various questions might be, they all felt within them a throb of enthusiasm for their new life, their own country, and a determination that, irrespective of the different views, they would give their country an intellectual and a political future worthy of all the sufferings that every class and creed of the country had gone through in the past.

"You're disappointed," my young friend said, "but if you stay here much longer you'll get used to hearing people talk about working for Ireland, helping Ireland, selling boots for Ireland, and bullocks too. You'll find if you read the papers that Gill's speech will be very much liked—much more than Yeats'. The comment will be: 'We want more of that kind of thing in Ireland.'"

My young friend's cynicism now began to get upon my nerves, and turning upon him rudely, I said:

"Then you don't believe in the language movement?"

His reply not being satisfactory, and his accent not convincing of his Celtic origin, I grew suddenly hostile, and resolved not to speak to him again during dinner; and to show how entirely I disapproved of his attitude towards Ireland, I affected a deep interest in the rest of Gill's speech, which, needless to say, was all about working for Ireland. Amid the applause which followed I heard a voice at the end of the table saying, "We want more of that in Ireland."

My neighbour laughed, but his laughter only irritated me still more against him, and my eyes went to Yeats, who sat, his head drooping on his shirt-front, like a crane, uncertain whether he should fold himself up for the night, and I wondered what was the beautiful eloquence that was germinating in his mind. He would speak to us about the gods, of course, and about Time and Fate and the gods being at war; and the moment seemed so long that I grew irritated with Gill for not calling upon

him at once for a speech. At length this happened, and Yeats rose, and a beautiful commanding figure he seemed at the end of the table, pale and in profile, with long nervous hands and a voice resonant and clear as a silver trumpet. He drew himself up and spoke against Trinity College, saying that it had always taught the ideas of the stranger, and the songs of the stranger, and the literature of the stranger, and that was why Ireland had never listened and Trinity College had been a sterile influence. The influences that had moved Ireland deeply were the old influences that had come down from generation to generation, handed on by the story-tellers that collected in the evenings round the fire, creating for learned and unlearned a communion of heroes. But my memory fails me; I am disfiguring and blotting the beautiful thoughts that I heard that night clothed in lovely language. He spoke of Cherubim and Seraphim, and the hierarchies and the clouds of angels that the Church had set against the ancient culture, and then he told us that gods had been brought vainly from Rome and Greece and Judæa. In the imaginations of the people only the heroes had survived, and from the places where they had walked their shadows fell often across the doorways; and then there was something wonderfully beautiful about the blue ragged mountains and the mystery that lay behind them, ragged mountains flowing southward. But the speech has gone for ever. I have searched the newspapers, but the journalist's report is feebler even than my partial memory. It seemed to me that while Yeats spoke I was lifted up and floated in mid-air. . . . But I will no longer attempt the impossible; suffice it to say that I remember Yeats sinking back like an ancient oracle exhausted by prophesying.

A shabby, old, and woolly-headed man seated at the head of the second table rose up and said he could not accept Yeats' defence of the ancient beliefs—Ireland

had not begun to be Ireland until Patrick arrived; and he went on till everybody was wearied. Then it was my turn to read the lines I had dictated at the typist's.

After some words hastily improvised, some stuttering apology for daring to speak in the land of oratory (perhaps I said something about the misfortune of having to speak after Demosthenes, alluding, of course, to Yeats), I explained the reason for my return to Ireland: how in my youth I had gone to France because art was there, and how, when art died in France, I had returned to England; and now that art was dead in England I was looking out like one in a watch-tower to find which way art was winging. Westward, probably, for all the countries of Europe had been visited by art, and art never visits a country twice. It was not improbable that art might rest awhile in this lonely Northern island! so my native country had again attracted me. And when I had said that I had come, like Bran, to see how they were getting on at home, I spoke of Yeats' poetry, saying that there had been since the ancient bards poets of merit, competent poets, poets whom I did not propose they should either forget or think less of; but Ireland, so it seemed to me, had no poet who compared for a moment with the great poet of whom it was my honour to speak that night. It was because I believed that in the author of *The Countess Cathleen* Ireland had recovered her ancient voice that I had undertaken the journey from London, and consented to what I had hitherto considered the most disagreeable task that could befall me—a public speech. I told them I would not have put myself to the inconvenience of a public speech for anything in the world except a great poet—that is to say, a man of exceptional genius, who was born at a moment of great national energy. This was the advantage of Shakespeare and Victor Hugo, as well as Yeats. The works of Yeats were not yet, and probably never would be, as voluminous

as those of either the French or the English poet, but I could not admit that they are less perfect. I pointed out that the art of writing a blank-verse play was so difficult that none except Shakespeare and Yeats had succeeded in this form.

"The assertion," I said, "seems extravagant; but think a moment, and you will see that it is nearer the truth than you suppose. We must not be afraid of praising Mr. Yeats' poetry too much; we must not hesitate to say that there are lyrics in the collected poems as beautiful as any in the world. We must," I said, "be courageous in front of the Philistine, and insist that the lyric entitled 'Innisfree' is insurpassable."

And I concluded by saying that twenty years hence this week in Ireland would be looked back upon with reverence. Then things would have fallen into their true perspective. The Saxon would have recovered from his bout of blackguardism, and would recognize with sorrow that while he was celebrating Mr. Kipling, Marie Corelli, Mrs. Humphry Ward and Mr. Pinero, the Celt was celebrating in a poor wayside house the idealism of Mr. Yeats.

My paper irritated a red-bearded man sitting some way down the table. He wore no moustache, but his beard was like a horse's collar under his chin, and his face was like glass, and his voice was like the breaking of glass, and everybody wondered why he should speak so sourly about everybody, myself included. "Now that Mr. Moore thinks that Ireland has raised herself to his level, Mr. Moore has been kind enough to return to Ireland, like Bran."

"Who is he?" I asked Yeats.

"Bran is one of the greatest of our legends."

"Yes, I know that. But the man who is speaking?"

"A great lawyer," Yeats answered, "who has never quite come into his inheritance."

And the gritty voice went on proclaiming the genius of the Irish race.

"But, Yeats," I said, "he is talking nonsense. All races are the same; none much better or worse than another: merely blowing dust; the dust higher up the road is no better than the dust lower down."

Yeats said this would be an excellent point to make in my answer, and Gill said that I must get up; but I shook my head, and sat listening to my speech, seeing it quite clearly, and the annihilation of my enemy in every stinging sentence, but without the power to rise up and speak it.

"Who would care for France," I whispered to Yeats, "if it only consisted of peasants, industrious or idle? The race is anonymous, and passes away if it does not produce great men who do great deeds, and if there be no great contemporary writers to chronicle their valour. What nonsense that man is talking, Yeats! Do get up and speak for me. Tell him that the fields are speechless, and the rocks are dumb. In the last analysis everything depends upon the poet. Tell him that, and that it is for Ireland to admire us, not for us to admire Ireland. Dear me, what nonsense, Yeats! Do speak for me."

Yeats tried to push me on to my feet.

"No, no!" I said; "I will not. My one claim to originality among Irishmen is that I have never made a speech."

Gill waited for me, and looking at him steadily, I said "No"; and he answered,

"Then I will call upon Hyde."

"Hyde," I said; "that is the man I want to see."

He had been sitting on my side of the table, and I could only catch glimpses of his profile between the courses when he looked up at the waiter and asked him for more champagne, and the sparkling wine and the

great yellow skull sloping backwards had seemed a little incongruous. "A shape strangely opposite," I said, "to Rolleston, who has very little back to his head." All Hyde's head seemed at the back, like a walrus, and the drooping black moustache seemed to bear out the likeness. As nothing libels a man as much as his own profile, I resolved to reserve my opinion of his appearance until I had seen his full face. His volubility was as extreme as a peasant's come to ask for a reduction of rent. It was interrupted, however, by Edward calling on him to speak in Irish, and then a torrent of dark, muddied stuff flowed from him, much like the porter which used to come up from Carnacun to be drunk by the peasants on midsummer nights when a bonfire was lighted. It seemed to me a language suitable for the celebration of an antique Celtic rite, but too remote for modern use. It had never been spoken by ladies in silken gowns with fans in their hands or by gentlemen going out to kill each other with engraved rapiers or pistols. Men had merely cudgelled each other, yelling strange oaths the while in Irish, and I remembered it in the mouths of the old fellows dressed in breeches and worsted stockings, swallow-tail coats and tall hats full of dirty bank-notes which they used to give to my father. Since those days I had not heard Irish, and when Hyde began to speak it an instinctive repulsion rose up in me, quelled with difficulty, for I was already a Gaelic Leaguer. Hyde, too, perhaps on account of the language, perhaps it was his appearance, inspired a certain repulsion in me, which, however, I did not attempt to quell. He looked so like a native Irish speaker; or was it?—and perhaps it was this—he looked like an imitation native Irish speaker; in other words, like a stage Irishman.

Passing without comment over the speeches of the various professors of Trinity, I will tell exactly how I saw Hyde in the ante-room from a quiet corner whence

I could observe him accurately. He was talking to a group of friends. "Is he always so hilarious, so voluble?" "I'm so delighted," I could hear him saying to some newcomer, "so delighted to see you again. Well, this is really a pleasure."

His three-quarter face did not satisfy me, but, determined to be just, I refused to allow any opinion of him to creep into my mind until I had seen him in full face; and when he turned, and I saw the full face, I was forced to admit that something of the real man appeared in it: I sat admiring the great sloping, sallow skull, the eyebrows like blackthorn bushes growing over the edge of a cliff, the black hair hanging in lank locks, a black moustache streaking the yellow-complexioned face, dropping away about the mouth and chin.

"Without doubt an aboriginal," I said.

He spoke with his head thrust over his thin chest, as they do in Connemara. Yet what name more English than Hyde? It must have come to him from some English ancestor—far back, indeed, for it would require many generations of intermarriage with Celtic women to produce so Celtic an appearance.

At this moment my reflections were interrupted by Hyde himself. A common friend brought him over and introduced him to me, and when I told him of my interest in the language movement, he was vociferously enthusiastic, and I said to myself: "He has the one manner for everybody."

Some of his writings were known to me—some translations he had made of the peasant songs of Connaught—and I admired them, though they seemed untidily written, the verse and the prose. I had read some of his propagandist literature, and this, too, was of a very untidy kind. So the conclusion was forced upon me that in no circumstance could Hyde have been a man of letters in English or in Irish.

"The leader has absorbed the scholar. So perhaps the language movement is his one chance of doing something."

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Æ. I had read his articles in the *Express,* and looking at him I remembered the delight and the wonder which his verse and prose had awakened in me. It was just as if somebody had suddenly put his hand into mine, and led me away into a young world which I recognized at once as the fabled Arcady that had flourished before man discovered gold, and forged the gold into a ring which gave him power to enslave. White mist curled along the edge of the woods, and the trees were all in blossom. There were tall flowers in the grass, and gossamer threads glittered in the rays of the rising sun. Under the trees every youth and maiden was engaged in some effusive moment of personal love, or in groups they wove garlands for the pleasure of the children, or for the honour of some god or goddess. Suddenly the songs of the birds were silenced by the sound of a lyre; Apollo and his Muses appeared on the hillside; for in these stories the gods and mortals mixed in delightful comradeship, the mortals not having lost all trace of their divine origin, and the gods themselves being the kind, beneficent gods that live in Arcady.

The paper had dropped from my hands, and I said: "Here is the mind of Corot in verse and prose; the happiness of immemorial moments under the blossoming boughs, when the soul rises to the lips and the feet are moved to dance. Here is the inspired hour of sunset"; and it seemed to me that the man must live always in this hour, and that he not only believed in Arcady, but that Arcady was always in him. "While we strive after happiness he holds it in his hand," I said, and it was to meet this man that I had come to Ireland as much as to see the plays.

He had refused to dine with us because he did not wish to put on evening clothes, but he had come in afterwards, more attractive than anybody else in the room in his grey tweeds, his wild beard, and shaggy mane of hair. Some friends we seem to have known always, and try as we will we cannot remember the first time we saw them; whereas our first meetings with others are fixed in our mind, and as clearly as if it had happened no later than yesterday, I remember Æ coming forward to meet me, and the sweetness of his long grey eyes. He was more winning than I had imagined, for, building out of what Yeats had told me in London, I had imagined a sterner, rougher, ruder man. Yeats had told me how a child, while walking along a country road near Armagh, had suddenly begun to think, and in a few minutes the child had thought out the whole problem of the injustice of a creed which tells that God will punish him for doing things which he never promised not to do.

The day was a beautiful summer's day, the larks were singing in the sky, and in a moment of extraordinary joy Æ realized that he had a mind capable of thinking out everything that was necessary for him to think out for himself, realizing in a moment that he had been flung into the world without his consent, and had never promised not to do one thing or do another. It was hardly five minutes since he had left his aunt's house, yet in this short space his imagination had shot up into heaven and defied the Deity who had condemned him to the plight of the damned because—he repeated the phrase to himself—he had done something which he had never promised not to do. It mattered nothing what that thing was—the point was that he had made no promise; and his mind embracing the whole universe in one moment, he understood that there is but one life: the dog at his heels and the stars he would soon see (for the dusk was gathering) were not different things, but one thing.

"There is but one life," he had said to himself, "divided endlessly, differing in degree, but not in kind"; and at once he had begun to preach the new gospel.

I had heard how, when earning forty pounds a year in an accountant's office, he used to look at his boots, wondering whether they would carry him to the sacred places where the Druids ascended and descended in many coloured spirals of flame; and fearing that they would not hold together for forty long miles, he had gone to Bray Head and had addressed the holiday folk. I could hear the tumult, the ecstasy of it all! I could see him standing on a bit of wall, his long, thin, picturesque figure with grey clothes drooping about it, his arms extended in feverish gesture, throwing back his thick hair from his face, telling the crowd of the sacred places of Ireland, of the Druids of long ago, and their mysteries, and how much more potent these were than the dead beliefs which they still clung to; I could hear him telling them that the genius of the Gael, awakening in Ireland after a night of troubled dreams, returns instinctively to the belief of its former days, and finds again the old inspiration.

"The Gael seeks again the Gods of the mountains, where they live enfolded in a mantle of multitudinous tradition. Once more out of the heart of mystery he had heard the call 'Come away'; and after that no other voice had power to lure—there remained only the long heroic labours which end in the companionship of the Gods."

The reason I have not included any personal description of Æ is because he exists rather in one's imagination, dreams, sentiments, feelings, than in one's ordinary sight and hearing, and try as I will to catch the fleeting outlines, they escape me; and all I remember are the long, grey, pantheistic eyes that have looked so often into my soul and with such a kindly gaze.

"Those are the eyes," I said, "that have seen the

old Celtic Gods"; for certainly Æ saw them when he wandered out of the accountant's office in his old shoes, into Meath, and lay under the trees that wave about the Druid hills; or, sitting on some mountain-side, Angus and Diarmuid and Grania and Deirdre have appeared to him, and Mannanan MacLir has risen out of the surge before him, and Dana the great Earth Spirit has chanted in his ears. If she had not, he could not have written those articles which enchanted me. Never did a doubt cross my mind that these great folk had appeared to Æ until he put a doubt into my mind himself, for he not only admitted that he did not know Irish (that might not be his fault, and the Gods might have overlooked it, knowing that he was not responsible for his ignorance), but that he did not believe in the usefulness of the Irish language.

"But how, then, am I to believe that the Gods have appeared to you?" I answered. "That Angus and Diarmuid, Son of Angus, have conversed with you? That Dana the Earth Spirit has chanted in your ears?"

"The Gods," he answered, "speak not in any mortal language; one becomes aware of their immortal Presences."

"Granted. But the Gods of the Gael have never spoken in the English language; it has never been spoken by any Gods."

"Whatever language the Gods speak becomes sacred by their use."

"That is begging the question. I can't accept you as the redeemer of the Gael"; and I turned from him petulantly, let it be confessed, and asked somebody to introduce me to John Eglinton. "I'm vexed, Æ," I said, "and will go and talk with John Eglinton. For not having ever communed with the Gods he is at liberty to deny their speech."

And John Eglinton told me that it was not from the Gods that he had learned what he knew of the Irish lan-

guage; that his was only a very slight knowledge acquired from O'Growney and some of Hyde's folk-tales.

"So you've learned Irish enough to read it?" And I grew at once interested in John Eglinton, and pressed him to continue his studies, averring that I had not time to learn the language myself. "And now what is your opinion about it as a medium of literary expression?"

Before he could answer me I had asked him if he did not think that English was becoming a lean language, and all I remember is that in the middle of the discussion John Eglinton dropped the phrase: "The Irish language strikes me as one that has never been to school."

"Of course it hasn't. How could it? But is a language the worse for that?"

We began to argue how much a language must be written in before it becomes fitted for literary use, and during the discussion I studied John Eglinton, wondering why he had said that the Irish language had never been to school. Was it because he was interested in education? There was something of the schoolmaster in his appearance and in his talk. The articles he had published in the *Express* had interested me, for they were written by a clever man; but at that time Æ had cast a spell upon me, and only his eloquence could appeal to me. John Eglinton had only seemed to me dryly a writer, and I could only regard as intolerable that an editor should be found so tolerant as to allow John Eglinton to contravene Æ, and remembering all this, I noticed a thin, small man with dark red hair growing stiffly over a small skull; and I studied the round head and the high forehead, and the face somewhat shrivelled and thickly freckled.

"A gnarled, solitary life," I said, "lived out in all the discomforts inherent in a bachelor's lodging, a sort of lonely thorn-tree. One sees one sometimes on a hillside and not another tree near it." The comparison amused

me, for John Eglinton argued with me in a thorny, tenacious way, and remembering his beautiful prose, I said: "The thorn breaks to flower," and continued to discover analogies. A sturdy life has the thorn, bent on one side by the wind, looking as if sometimes it had been almost strangled by the blast. John Eglinton, too, looked as if he had battled; and I am always attracted by those who have battled, and who know how to live alone. Looking at him more attentively, I said: "If he isn't a schoolmaster he is engaged in some business: an accountant's office, perhaps; and the tram takes him there every morning at the same hour. A bachelor he certainly is, and an inveterate one; but not because all women appeal to him, or nearly all; rather because no woman appeals to him much, not sufficiently to induce him to change his habits. He sits in the tram, his hands clasped over his stick, and no flowered skirt rouses him from his literary reverie."

So did I see him going into Dublin in the morning. If there ever had been any feminine trouble in his life it must have been a faint one, and could not have interested him very intensely, a little surprise to himself as soon as it was over. Talking to him, a woman must feel as if there was a stone wall between them. Many will think that this seems to imply a lack of humanity, for the many appreciate only humanity in the sexual instinct, an instinct which we share with all animals and insects; only the very lowest forms of life are epicene. Yet, somehow, we are all inclined to think that man is never so much man as when he is in pursuit of the female. Perhaps he is never less man than at that moment. We are apt to think we are living intensely when we congregate in numbers in drawing-rooms and gossip about the latest publications, social and literary, and there is a tendency in us all to look askance at the man who likes to spend the evening alone with his book and his cat, who looks for-

ward to lonely holidays, seeing in them long solitary walks in the country, much the same walks as he enjoyed the summer before, when he wandered through pleasantly-wooded prospects, seeing hills unfolding as he walked mile after mile, pleasantly conscious of himself, and of the great harmony of which he is a part.

The man of whom I am dreaming, shy, unobtrusive and lonely, whose interests are literary, and whose life is not troubled by women, feels intensely and hoards in his heart secret enthusiasms and sentiments which in other men flow in solution here and there down any feminine gutter. I thought of Emerson and then of Thoreau —a Thoreau of the suburbs. And remembering how beautiful John Eglinton's writings are, how gnarled and personal, like the man himself, my heart went out to him a little, and I wondered if we should ever become friends. I liked him for his lack of effusiveness.

"The hard North is better than the soft, peaty, Catholic stuff which comes from Connaught," I said to myself, turning from John Eglinton to Edward, who had come to ask if I would go back with him to his lodgings to smoke a cigar before going to bed.

CHAP. V.

WHILE strolling with him, or sitting beside him smoking cigars, listening to him talking about the success of *The Heather Field,* the thought often crossed my mind that his life had flowered in the present year, and that after it all would be decline. He was to me a pathetic figure as he sat sunning himself in the light of Ibsen and Parnell, his exterior placid as a parish priest's; for knowing him from the very beginning of his life, and having seen the play written, I was not duped like the others. "He is thinking that his dreams are coming to pass, and believes himself to be the Messiah—he who

will give Ireland literature and her political freedom"; and I wondered how far he would go before puncturing like the others.

He was talking about his new comedy, *The Tale of a Town*. Politicians were satirized and things were said in it that might create a riot, and the riot in the theatre might spread to the streets, and a flame run all over Ireland. "We cannot afford, Edward, to have the Gaiety Theatre wrecked." A shadow used to come into his face at the moral responsibility he was incurring by writing *The Tale of a Town;* but heresies frighten him more than destruction of property; he was prepared to risk the play, and took refuge in generalities, saying he was no good at telling a plot. A doubt rises up in my mind always when I hear an author say he cannot tell his plot, for if there be one, a baby can tell it, and it is the plot that counts; the rest is working out, and can be accomplished if one is a writer. All I could learn from him was that the play was nearly finished. He was going down to Galway to work over the dialogue for the last time, and then the manuscript would be sent to Yeats, and when it was read it would be sent to London to me, for the rules of the Irish Literary Theatre were that no play could be performed without the approval of the three directors.

"You may expect it in about three weeks."

And a memorable morning it was in Victoria Street when I received the parcel and cut the string, saying:

"We shall be able to talk about this comedy, and to discuss its production, on our way to Bayreuth, when we have said all we have to say about Wagner and his *Ring.*"

The first half-dozen pages pleased me, and then Edward's mind, which can never think clearly, revealed itself in an entanglement; "which will be easily removed," I said, picking up the second act. But the second act

did not please me as much as the first, and I laid it down, saying: "Muddle, muddle, muddle." In the third act Edward seemed to fall into gross farcical situations, and I took up the fourth act sadly. It and the fifth dissipated every hope, and I lay back in my chair thinking of the letter that would have to be written to dear Edward telling him that his play, in my opinion, could not be acted, nearly in a state of coma, unable to drag myself to the writing-table. But getting there at last, I wrote—after complimenting him about a certain improvement in the dialogue—that the play seemed to me very inferior to *The Heather Field* and to *Maeve*.

"But plainer speaking is necessary. It may well be inferior to *The Heather Field* and to *Maeve*, and yet be worthy of the Irish Literary Theatre."

So I wrote: "There is not one act in the five you have sent me which, in my opinion, could interest any possible audience—Irish, English, or Esquimaux. There you have it, my dear friend; that is my opinion. But perhaps we shall be able to straighten it out on our way to Bayreuth, and on our way home."

After posting such a letter one is seized with scruples, and I walked about the room asking myself if a pinch of human kindness be not worth more than a cartload of disagreeable truths. Edward was my friend, the friend of my boyhood, and I had written to say that the play he had been working upon for the last two years was worthless. Why not have saddled Yeats and Lady Gregory with the duty? One looks at the question from different points of view, worrying a great deal, coming back to the point—that lies would not have saved our trip abroad. Be that as it may, my letter had probably wrecked it.

We were to meet at Victoria Station, and if Edward were to turn "rusty" what would happen? The theatre tickets would be lost. No Bayreuth for me that year;

impossible to travel in Germany when one doesn't know a word of German. I regretted again the letter I had written, and watched the post. Letters came, but none from Edward. This was a good sign. If he were not coming he would let me know. All the same, the quarter of an hour before the train started was full of anxiety.

"Ah, there he is! We're going to Bayreuth after all!"

There he was—huge and puffy, his back to the engine, his belly curling splendidly between his short fat thighs, his straw hat perched on the top of his head, broader at the base than at the crown, a string dangling from it. We sat embarrassed; Edward did not seem embarrassed, but I suppose he must have been; I was embarrassed enough for two. The play would have to be talked about. But who would open the conversation? Edward did not seem inclined to speak about it, and for me to do so before Clapham Junction would be lacking in courtesy. Ask him for a cigar! But one cannot talk of the quality of a cigar beyond Croydon, and when we had passed through the station the strain became unbearable. Besides, I was anxious to æstheticize.

"I was sorry I didn't like your play, but you see you asked my opinion, and there was no use my giving you a false one."

"I daresay you are right. I'm no critic; all the same, it was a great disappointment to me to hear that you didn't like it."

I had expected a note of agony in his voice, and was shocked to find that he could enjoy a cigar while I gave him some of my reasons for thinking his play unpresentable. If he were a real man of letters it would be otherwise—so why should I pity him? And the pity for him which had been gathering in my heart melted away, and suddenly I found myself angry with him, and would have said some unpleasant things about his religion if he had not dropped the phrase that my letter

had entirely spoilt the pleasure of his trip round the coast of Ireland in a steamer with a party of archæologists. I begged for an account of this trip, and he told me that they had visited pagan remains in Donegal and Arran, and many Christian ruins, monasteries and round-towers, and my naturally kind heart was touched by the thought of Edward lagging in the rear, thinking of his unfortunate play and the letter I had written him, his step quickening when Coffey began his discourses, but proving only an indifferent listener.

One would have to lack the common sympathies not to feel for Edward, and to myself I seemed a sort of executioner while telling him that the play would have to be altered, and extensively altered. It was not a matter of a few cuts; my letter must have made that clear; but he had not been told the whole truth. He probably suspected it would be forthcoming, if not on board the train, on board the boat. A courageous fellow is Edward before criticism, perhaps because art is not the great concern of his life; and he would have listened to the bitter end; but it seemed to me that it would be well to allow my criticism to work down into his mind. The subject was dropped; we talked about *The Ring* all the way to Dover, and on board the boat he whistled the motifs, looking over the taffrail until it was time to go to bed. His manner was propitious, and it seemed to me that in the morning he would listen to the half-dozen alterations that were of an elemental necessity, and turning these over in my mind, I fell asleep, and awoke thinking of them, and nothing could have prevented me from telling Edward how the third act might be reconstructed the moment we got on deck but the appearance of the foreland as we steamed into Holland.

A dim light had just begun to filter through some grey clouds, like the clouds in Van Goyen's pictures; and the foreland—sand and tussocked grass, with a grey sea

slopping about it—was drawn exactly as he would have drawn it.

"The country has never quite recovered from his genius and the genius of his contemporaries though two hundred years have passed away," I said, mentioning, as we climbed into the train, that painting was no longer possible in Holland.

Edward wished to know why this was, and I kept him waiting till breakfast for an answer, saying then: "The country is itself a picture. See! A breeze has just awakened a splendid Ruysdael in the bay. A little farther on we shall pass a wood which Hobbema certainly painted." We did, and we had not got many miles before we came upon some fields with cattle in them. "Dujardin and Berghem." And afterwards the train sped through flat meadows intersected by drains, for the country, once marish, had been redeemed by the labour of the Dutchmen—"indefatigable labour," I said. "When they drove the Catholics out of Holland, art and Protestantism began together. Look! See those winding herds. Cuyp! Look into the mist and you'll see him in his leathern jerkin, and his great beaver hat with a plume in it, stalking the cattle, drawing bits at a time—heads and hind quarters. I don't like Holland; it looks too much like pictures—and pictures I have wearied of."

It seemed to me that we were wasting time. What was important was *The Tale of a Town,* for another alteration had come into my mind; and anxious to know how it would strike Edward, I asked him to give me his attention.

"Don't look at those fields any more; forget Dujardin and Berghem, forget Cuyp; let us think of *The Tale of a Town.*"

His lack of eagerness was discouraging; all the same I began my serious criticism, to which was given an excellent but somewhat stolid attention.

"There is no growth in the first act, and very little in the second, and the scene of the meeting in which Jasper Dean makes his great speech must come in the middle of the play, and not at the beginning of it."

I waited for some acknowledgment from Edward, but was unable to get from him either assent or dissent.

"You're a very good critic," he repeated again and again, and that irritated me, for, of course, one thinks one is something more than a critic.

"Is it possible that he thinks his play perfect? Or is it that he would not like to bring any outside influence into it, because to do so might impair its originality? It must be one of these things. Which?"

Edward opened his valise, and took a book out of it, and began to read, and I was left to continue my meditations. Was it that Edward was what I had often believed him to be: merely an amateur? An amateur of talent, but an amateur. That was Symons' opinion. He said: "Martyn will always remain an amateur, whereas you, notwithstanding your deficiencies, can be considered a writer."

His words were remembered, for Edward's aversion from my suggestions discovered the amateur in him. It was not that he disapproved of the alterations, but he did not like to accept them because they were not his. The amateur always puts himself before his work, and it is only natural that he should do so, for the amateur writes or paints when he has time. When weary of the glory that a title or a motor-car brings him, he writes a book about Shakespeare's Sonnets, or David Cox's slushy water-colours, or maybe an appreciation of Napoleon; whereas the artist is interested in the thing itself, and will accept readily a suggestion from anyone, if he thinks that it will be to the advantage of the work to do so. *Je prends moñ bien où je le trouve* is his device, the motto upon his shield. Anybody who can improve a sentence of

mine by the omission of a comma or by the placing of a comma is looked upon as my dearest friend. But Edward . . .

The interruption in my thoughts concerning him was caused by a sudden motion to ask him which was our first halting-place. I expected him to answer "Cologne," where we had stopped before to hear a contrapuntal Mass; two choirs, as well as I remember, answering each other from different sides of the cathedral, the voices dividing and uniting, seeking each other along and across the aisles. It was my first experience of this kind of music, and I had preserved a vague, perhaps, but intense memory of it, and feeling somewhat disappointed that we were not going to hear another Mass by Palestrina. I asked Edward for his reasons for this change of route, and my astonishment was great when he began to speak disparagingly of the Cologne music, and my astonishment passed into amazement when he told me that the music we had heard was not by Palestrina at all, but only a modern imitation of his manner. It had seemed to me so beautiful that I did not like to hear its authenticity called into question, but Edward was very firm, and it soon became plain that he knew he had been deceived, and that all mention of Cologne was disagreeable to him. "We shall never stop there again," I said to myself, and to fall in with his humour, spoke of the cathedral, which we looked upon as an ugly building. How could it be otherwise? It was begun in the Middle Ages and finished somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century. But the cathedral at Aix he declared to be pure thirteenth-century, with a good deal of old glass still in the windows; and he looked forward to hearing Mass, his eyes raised to some wonderful purples which a friend of his in London, in whom he placed great faith, had told him to be sure not to miss seeing.

"Ugly glass, ugly vestments, ugly architecture, dis-

tract one's attention from one's prayers. The music is simple at Aix, but I hear it is excellent"; and he pressed me to go with him in the morning, saying that I would be able to appreciate the glass better during the service than afterwards.

"The purples you speak of must be wonderful when there is a prayer in the heart, but I cannot pray in a church, Edward."

The folk were coming out when I arrived, but Edward was not among them, and I feared that my opportunity was lost of learning something definite about architecture. He might, however, be in the church, and was discovered after a long search at the end of a pew, in a distant corner, still praying heavily. Reluctant to interrupt him, I stood watching, touched by his piety. He crossed himself, came out of the pew, genuflected before the altar, and hastened towards me, now ready to explain the difference between the Romanesque and the Gothic, and that day I learned that the Romanesque windows are round and the Gothic pointed.

It is always interesting to add to one's store of information; all the simple facts of the world are not known to everybody; and when Edward had told me that the cathedral at Aix bore traces of both styles, we went to study the stained glass, stopping before a large window, the beauty of which, he said, filled him with enthusiasm for the genius of the thirteenth century.

"But, my dear Edward, I'm sure that is a modern window."

Whereupon he blazed out. He respected my judgment, but not about stained glass, nor about architecture, and he reminded me that five minutes before I did not know the difference between the Gothic and the Romanesque.

"That is quite true; all the same, I know that window to be modern"; and after a heated argument we went in search of a beadle, who produced a guide-book and a

little English; Edward produced a little German, and between the three—guide-book, German-English, and English-German—it was established beyond doubt that the window was exactly six years old.

But let no one conclude that this story is told in order to show that dear Edward is one of the nine hundred and ninety and nine who cannot distinguish between the thirteenth century and a modern imitation of it. Were the story told for this purpose I should be a false friend, and, what is worse, a superficial writer. The story is told in order to show Edward when the fog descends upon him. His comprehension is never the same. There is always a little mist about; sometimes it is no more than a white, evanescent mist sufficient to dim the outlines of things, making them seem more beautiful; sometimes the mist thickens into yellow fog through which nothing is seen. It trails along the streets of his mind, filling every alley, and then the fog lifts and pinnacles are seen again. He is like Ireland, the country he came from; sometimes a muddling fog, sometimes a delicious mist with a ray of light striking through; and that is why he is the most delightful of travelling companions. One comes very soon to the end of a mind that thinks clearly, but one never comes to the end of Edward.

After the cathedral we went to the picture-gallery, and I remember a number of small rooms—hung with pictures, of course, since it was a picture-gallery—and going down these with Edward, and being stopped suddenly by the sight of one picture so beautiful that all the others are forgotten.

"Who can have painted it? Let us stand here—don't go near it; let us try to work it out."

We stood a long time admiring one of the most beautiful pieces of painting in the world, unable to suggest the name of a painter—a picture, let us say, twenty-four by thirty-six (remember, it is ten or a dozen years

since I have seen it!) painted on canvas or on a panel; for aught I know it may be painted on copper; but if I have forgotten the details that interest the bric-à-brac hunter, I have not forgotten the painting. But no more than this will I say about it—that it is not by Hondecoeter nor by Cuyp, who painted barn-door fowls occasionally, nor by Snyders. Its brilliant beauty is beyond the scope of their palettes. Shall I satisfy the curiosity of the reader, or shall I excite it by concealing the name? Excite it by telling him to be sure to stop at Aix-la-Chapelle on his way to Bayreuth to see the most beautiful cock that ever trod a hen on a dunghill—a glowing, golden bird.

CHAP. VI.

A LONG train journey awaited us (and Edward insists on travelling second-class, however hot the weather may be), and all the way to Mainz the day grew hotter and hotter, the carriage narrower and narrower, and Edward's knees longer and longer. Our carriage was filled with large-bellied Germans, and whenever the train stopped, and any of our travelling-companions got out, other Germans, as large-bellied as those who left us, climbed in, followed by their *Frauen*—swaying, perspiring German females, hugely-breasted, sweating in their muslin dresses, and tediously good-humoured. It was necessary to find places for the new arrivals and their luggage, and all the way to Mainz it seemed to me that Edward was being asked to remove his luggage, and that I was helping him to lift his valise into the rack or out of it.

The cathedral is in red brick—rose-coloured domes upon a blue sky—and it is said to be of very ancient date; whether Gothic or Romanesque I cannot remember. Edward seemed loath to express an opinion, and he questioned me regarding the probable age of certain walls,

but not with a view to tempting me into a trap, and so repair his own mistakes with mine; he is far too good-natured for that. I should like to have shown off; *faire la roue* is natural to every human being; but fearing to lose my newly-acquired prestige by a mistake, I assured Edward that Mainz cathedral was "all right," and hurried him off to catch the boat, anxious to get away, for Mainz is a pompous town—imitation French, white streets with tall blue roofs, and some formal gardens along the river. We felt as if we were being roasted. The Rhine itself did not look cooler than molten lead, and we waited, limping over the burning cobble-stones and asphalt, till our boat turned in, our intention being to ascend the Rhine as far as the boats go.

A couple of hours of Rhenish scenery, however, tamed our enthusiasm, and I sought Edward out among the passengers, feeling that I must tell him at once that I had discovered Rhenish scenery to be entirely opposed to my temperament. As he wished me to see Lorelei, there was nothing for it but to remain on deck until the boat had passed the Rhine Maiden's Rock. The harpist and the fiddler whom we had on board might have attempted to play some of the Rhine music; they might at least have played the motifs, but they continued to scrape out their waltzes as we steamed over the very spot where Alberich had robbed the Maidens of the Fairy Gold.

"We are in the country of Günther and Hagen. It must have looked better in those days than it does now; otherwise Siegfried would not have left Brünnehilde."

"Do you really think the Rhine so ugly?"

"Edward! mile after mile of ugly, shapeless hills, disfigured by ruins of castles in which one would fain believe that robber-barons once lived, but one knows in one's heart that they were only built to attract tourists. And to make the hills seem still more ugly, vines have been

planted everywhere, and I know of nothing more unpicturesque than a vineyard. The beauty of a swelling wheat-field is obvious to everybody, and the lesser beauty of fields of oats, barley, and rye. I can admire a field of mustard, though I doubt if it would find its way more easily into a picture than a zebra or a Swiss châlet. I love sainfoin and clover, and do not turn up my nose at cabbages; a potato-field in flower is a beautiful sight; much can be said in favour of mangolds, mangold-wurzels; parsnips and turnip-tops are leathery, but under certain skies they present a pleasant variation in the landscape. A hop-country is one of the most beautiful things in the world, but vines are abhorrent—not for any moral reasons; I appreciate good wine with difficulty, but I'm not a teetotaller."

"Look; the other bank isn't so ugly."

"It is higher and steeper, and there are trees. But trees in Germany seem to lose their beauty; they clothe the hillside like gigantic asparagus."

At that moment a castle rose up through the trees, seemingly built upon the top of a crag, and we learned from one of the officers on board that it belonged to a certain German baron who spent some months of every year in it; and we wondered how he reached it, without experiencing, however, the slightest desire to visit him and his German family.

"There's Boppart," Edward said. "We'll stop there."

My heart answered yes, for my heart is full of memories of Boppart, a charming little village on the banks of the river, where we dine on a balcony, and, with a bottle of Rhine wine on the table and the thought of the bottle that will follow in our minds, the hours dream themselves away. We awake at midnight as from fairyland. We have been in fairyland, for on Boppart's balcony we leave the casual and inferior interests of our daily lives to mingle with Gods and Goddesses. The story of *The*

Ring is told there by him that knows it best, amid pensive attitudes and minds uplifted to Valhalla; and in the telling the August dusk dies on the river, and the song of the river is heard at last coming up through the darkness.

All trains stop at Boppart, and Edward discovered a good one soon after midday; so we should have plenty of time to climb the hillside and visit the church, which we did, and found it to be a straight, stiff building with flying buttresses, fine in a way, built in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, when every building was beautiful . . . even in Germany. And when Edward had completed his inspection of the church we wandered about the hillside, finding ourselves at last in some shady gardens, where we had no right to stray. We shall never see those gardens again, but the dim green shade of the trees and the long grass are pleasant to remember. And it was pleasant to lie there for an hour, out of the way of the light. We who live under grey skies in the North always cry out for the light, but in the South we follow the shade; and I should have been glad to have lingered all the afternoon in that garden, but Edward was anxious to get on to Nuremberg.

The journey is a long and tedious one, and we did not arrive there before something had arisen as much like a quarrel as anything that could happen between me and Edward. A quarrel with Edward is so unthinkable that the reader will pardon me for telling what happened. We were both tired of talking, tired of holding our tongues, tired of thinking, and for some forgotten reason, the conversation had turned on newspapers, on their circulation, and how they may profit the owner through the advertisements if the circulation does not pass beyond a certain figure.

"But as the circulation increases the loss disappears."

"Not, Edward, if a single number costs more to pro-

duce than the price it is sold at. The illustrated paper we are speaking of is sold at sixpence. The editor makes a large profit if he sells twenty thousand, because if he can guarantee that circulation he can, let us say, get two thousand pounds of advertisements—the maximum that he can get; and as the paper costs sixpence-halfpenny to produce, you see, it will not do for him to sell twenty-five thousand or thirty thousand."

"But that is just what I don't see. I've always heard that if you sell enough——"

"That is when the cost of producing a single copy does not exceed the price at which it is sold."

Edward remained recalcitrant, and after many efforts on my part to explain, he begged me not to lose my temper.

"I can't see it."

"The fog, the fog," I said to myself, "is descending upon him. And never was it so thick as it is at this moment between Boppart and Nuremberg."

And it lasted all the evening, thickening during dinner, no sign of a pinnacle anywhere. It was not until next morning after breakfast that one began to appear.

"That illustrated paper," Edward began.

"You aren't going to open that discussion again," I replied, interrupting him.

"It was to tell you that I have been thinking over your argument, and that I see it all quite plainly now. There are times when my mind is denser than at others."

It is charming to hear a man admit that he is wrong—nothing is more winning; and we went away together, talking of Achilles and the tortoise, an admirable fallacy, resting, it appears, upon a false analogy which no one is able to detect. Edward, however, had been able to unravel the other problem, and we were going to see the old town. But on our way there we were stopped by the most beautiful fountain in the world, to which all

the folk come to draw water. The drawing of the water is accomplished by some strange medieval device which I cannot remember, and which if I did would be difficult to describe: a grooved iron (one cannot call it a pipe) is tipped over, it fills with water and then it is tipped back again, and the water runs out very prettily.

It surprises me that I am not able to produce a better description of an object that delighted and interested me for quite a long while, compelling me not only to drink when I was not thirsty, but forcing me to beg Edward to do likewise. He besought me to leave that fountain, but its beauty fascinated me. I returned to it again and again, and I remember yielding at last, not to exhortations that we should be late for dinner, nor to the strength of his arm, but to the eighteen stone to which that arm is attached. It dragged me away, I vowing all the while that I should never go to Nuremberg without finding time to run down to see that fountain. But the last time I was in Nuremberg, two years ago, the fountain was not to be discovered, at least by me, and after walking till we were both footsore, the friend who set out with me to seek it declared it to be a dream-fountain. We took a carriage, and questioned the driver. He pretended to understand and drove us to see a number of sights, and among them were some fountains, but not my fountain—mere parish pumps. My friend jeered the more. "A dream-fountain! A dream-fountain!" So I insisted on returning to the hotel to ask the way to the fountain from the hotel-porter. A Continental porter or concierge can understand trains and luggage in all languages, and when he has learned to do this his intellect is exhausted, like one who has won a fellowship at Trinity. And our man, to save himself from the suspicion that was beginning to fall upon him that he did not understand us, said the fountain had been abolished two years ago, an open fountain being considered injurious to the health of the

town. It may be so. But I have much difficulty in believing that the Nuremberg folk would permit such a vandalism, and shall be glad if some reader who knows German will inquire the matter out when he is next in Nuremberg, and publish, if he discovers it, the shameful order for the destruction of the fountain.

The old citadel crowns the hill, and around many devious streets a panting horse dragged us, through the burning afternoon, up to the castle gateway. We were shown the famous virgin of Nuremberg, and all the strange instruments that the ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages devised for the torment of their religious enemies, together with the stuffed representation of a robber-baron, said to have harried the town-folk for years, he and twenty-five companions. The tale runs that one day he failed to make good his retreat to his cave amid the woods, and was taken prisoner. The custom of the town was that a man condemned to death should be allowed whatever enjoyment he might choose on the eve of his execution; a last bite of the cake of earthly satisfactions should be his. The baron loved his horse, and declared that he chose to ride him through the town. No one divined a ruse in this choice. The baron was free for the time being, and putting spurs to his horse he jumped over the parapet into the moat, and swam the animal across it, and so escaped. But at the end of three years he was again taken prisoner; this time the usual gratification allowed to prisoners was refused him; he was put forthwith on the wheel, and his limbs broken one by one with an iron bar. And looking at the wheel, I said to Edward:

"You wouldn't have been broken, but I should, had I lived in those times; and Luther would not have escaped had it not been for the Elector of Saxony."

We discovered the great monk's portrait in the museum, and a splendid piece of portraiture it is, Cranach fixing upon our minds for ever a bluff face

with a fearless eye in it. We looked into the panel tenderly, thinking of the stormy story of his life—quite a little panel, eight or ten by six or seven inches, containing but the head and shoulders, and so like Luther! Those fifteenth-century painters convince us, giving in a picture a likeness more real than any photograph, and doing this because they were able to look at nature innocently. We wondered at his Adam and Eve, two little panels, hanging close by, single figures, covering with their hands "certain ridiculous but necessary organs," in modern pictures generally hidden by "somebody else's elbow, or a flying gull, or a flying towel, or what not." Modern painting is uninteresting because there is no innocency left in it. Blessed are the innocent, for theirs is the kingdom of Art!

Edward admired these nudes as much as I did, and when he said it was not a painter's but a photographer's studio that shocked him, I muttered to myself: "Pinnacles! pinnacles!" On this we went down the galleries, discovering suddenly a beautiful portrait by Boucher, and the question whether his vision was an innocent one arose, and it was discussed before a portrait of a beautiful woman, looking like some rare flower or a bird—only a head and shoulders, with all Boucher's extraordinary handicraft apparent in the dress she wears—a cynical thing, for the painter has told her story lightly, gracefully, almost casually.

And I had to admit that however much we may admire him, we cannot describe his vision as being as innocent as Cranach's.

All the same, these are the two painters who make Nuremberg rememberable, and we left it full of curiosity to see a town about sixty miles south of Bayreuth, having heard that it is to-day exactly as it was in the fifteenth century, less changed than any other town in Germany. The journey there was a wearisome one, for

our train shed some of its German peasantry at every station and gathered up more, and it carried many creels of geese, and these cackled monotonously, while a very small engine drew us with so much difficulty that we feared it would break down at the next ascent. But it reached Rothenburg, at the end of a long afternoon, blond as the cornfields through which we had come, and I said:

"We might have walked, driving the geese before us. We should have arrived in time for supper instead of arriving in time for dinner."

The station is about a mile distant from the town, whither the hotel omnibus took us, and having ordered dinner to be ready in an hour's time, we went out to see the streets, Edward, as usual, seeking the church, which was found at last. But I did not follow him into it, the evening being so fine that it seemed to me shameful to miss any moment of it. Never were the streets of Rothenburg more beautiful than that evening, not even when the costumes of old time moved through them. A more beautiful sky never unfolded, and girls, passing with alert steps and roguish glances, answering their admirers with sallies of impertinent humour, are always delightful. They and the sky absorbed my attention, for it is natural for me to admire what is permanent, whereas Edward is attached to the transitory. He had just come out of the church, where he had discovered a few bits of old glass, and he was talking of these eagerly, and congratulating himself that we had seen everything there was to be seen in Rothenburg, and would be able to go away next morning. His hurry to leave shocked me not a little. It seemed indeed like an insult to go into a town, look about one, and rush away again without bestowing a thought upon the people who lived in it. So did I speak to him, telling him that while he had been poking about in the church I had been thinking

of a sojourn of six months in Rothenburg in some pretty lodging which one could easily find to-morrow, and the attendance of a sweet German girl. From her it would be possible to learn a little German, rejoicing in her presence in the room while she repeated a phrase, so that we might catch the sound of the words. At the end of the day it would be pleasant to wander with my few mouthfuls of German into the fields, and make new acquaintances. The whole of my life would not be spent in Rothenburg, but enough of it to acquire a memory of Rothenburg. But Edward did not understand me. All he cared to study were the monuments and the public buildings, and from them he could learn all there was worth knowing about the people that had made them, "all people being more or less disagreeable to him," I said to myself; "especially women," I added, noticing that he averted his eyes from the girls that passed in twos and threes; and as if desirous to distract my attention from them, he called upon me to admire a very wide, red-tiled roof, and some old lanterns hung on a chain across the street. These things and the hillside over against our window interested Edward more than any man or woman could; quaint little houses went up the hillside like the houses in Dürer's pictures. There are quite a number of them in his picture of "Fortune." Everybody knows the woman who stands on the world holding a chalice in one hand; she does not hold it straight, as she would have done if the painter had been an inferior artist: Dürer leaned it a little towards the spectator. Over one arm hangs some curious bridle, at least in the engraving it seems to be a bridle with many bits and chains; and every one of these and the reins are drawn with a precision which gives them beauty. Dürer's eyes saw very clearly, and they had to see clearly, and steadily, to interest us in that great rump and thigh. One wonders who the model was, and why

Dürer chose her. Degas more than once drew a creature as short-legged and as bulky, and the model he chose was the wife of a butcher in the Rue La Rochefoucauld. The poor creature arrived in all her finery, the clothes which she wore when she went to Mass on Sunday, and her amazement and her disappointment are easily imagined when Degas told her he wanted her to pose for the naked. She was accompanied by her husband, and knowing her to be not exactly a Venus de Milo, he tried to dissuade Degas, and Edward, who has had little experience of life, expressed surprise that a husband should not guard his wife's honour more vigilantly; but he laughed when I told that Degas had assured the butcher that the erotic sentiment was not strong in him, and he liked my description of the poor, deformed creature standing in front of a tin bath, gripping her flanks with both hands—his bias towards ecclesiasticism enables him to sympathize with the Middle Ages, and its inherent tendency to regard women as inferior, and to keep them out of sight.

"It's strange," I said to myself, "to feel so different from one's fellows, to be exempt from all interest and solicitude for the female, to be uninfluenced by that beauty which sex dowers her with, and which achieves such marvels in the heart. We go to our mistresses as to Goddesses, and the peasant, though he does not think of Goddesses, thinks of the wife waiting for him at his fireside, with a tender, kindly emotion of which the labour of the fields has not been able to rob him. It's wonderful to come into the world, unconcerned with the other sex, Edward."

"You think I hate women. You're quite wrong. I don't hate women, only they seem absurd. When I see them going along the streets together they make me laugh; their hats and feathers, everything about them."

"We come into the world, Edward, with different

minds; that is a thing we can't remember too often. What makes you laugh enchants me. Nature has given us companions as different from us as the birds of the air, and for that I shall always feel grateful to Nature."

And then, just for the sake of expressing myself, though I knew that Edward would never understand, I told him that the coming of a woman into the room was like a delicious change of light.

"Without women we should be all reasonable, Edward; there would be no instinct, and a reasonable world—what would it be like? A garden without flowers, music without melody."

But these comparisons did not satisfy me, and seeking for another one I hit upon this, and it seemed to express my meaning better: without women the world would be like a palette set in raw umber and white. Women are the colouring matter, the glaze the old painters used. Edward wanted information as to the method employed by the old painters, but I preferred to develop my theme, telling him that a mother's affection for her daughter was quite different from her affection for her son, and that when a father looks upon his daughter he hears the love that he bore her mother echoed down the years, and muttering the old saw "God is Love," I said that it would be much truer to invert the words, considering religion as a development of the romance which begins on earth.

To one who realizes hell more clearly than heaven, and to one so temperamentally narrow as my friend, it must have been disagreeable to hear me say that religion has helped many to raise sex from earth to heaven; to instance Teresa as an example, saying how she has, in hundreds of pages of verse and prose, told her happy fate, that, by resigning an earthly, she has acquired an eternal Bridegroom.

It was in the second or the third century that the

Church became aware that heaven without a virgin could not commend itself to man's imagination, but the adoration of the Virgin, said to be encouraged by the Catholic Church, has never been realized by any saint that I know of—not even by St. Bernard. Nor is this altogether to be wondered at; the Virgin is always represented with a baby in her arms; motherhood is her constant occupation, and I can imagine Edward, to whom all exhibition of sex is disagreeable, being not a little shocked at the insistence of certain painters on the breast, the nipple, and the gluttonous lips of the child. The exhibition which women make of their bosoms at dinner-parties has always struck him as somewhat ludicrous. "Full-blown roses," he used to call them, reminding him of the flower-maidens in Klingsor's garden.

"Who could not tempt Parsifal, and would not tempt you, Edward. But would you have yelled as he did when Kundry tried to kiss him?"

By one of those intricate and elaborate analogies of thought which surprise us, Parsifal took me back to my chambers in King's Bench Walk, and I told Edward how, when I was writing *Esther Waters*, it was a help to me to gossip with my laundress after breakfast, a pious woman of the Nonconformist type, like Esther herself. Almost any topical event provided a basis for ethical discussion; a divorce case best of all, and the O'Shea divorce and Parnell's complicity seemed to me to be the very thing. But it was impossible to engage her attention, and soon it was evident that she was much more interested in a certain murder case—a Mrs. Percy who had murdered another woman's baby, and hidden it in a perambulator. It was the perambulator that gave the story the touch of realism that appealed to my laundress's imagination. But the murder of a baby offering little scope for ethical discussion, I took advantage of the first break in the

flow of her conversation to remind her that the crimes were not parallel.

"Don't you think so, sir?" And I can still see her rolling her apron about her arms. "It comes to the same thing in the end, sir, for when one party goes away with the other party, the party that's left behind dies."

Her view of life interested me; the importance of desertion is greater among the lower classes than it is among the upper; but it could not be doubted that she was telling me what she had heard from the parson rather than any view of her own, drawn from her experience. Therefore, to get at herself, to force her into direct personal expression, I said:

"You can't seriously maintain, Mrs. Millar, that adultery is as great a crime as murder?"

Still winding her coarse apron round her arms, she stood looking at me, her eyes perplexed and ambiguous, and I thought of how I might move her out of her position.

"You know your Bible, Mrs. Millar? You know the story of the woman of Samaria? And you remember that Christ forbade the people to stone her, and told her to sin no more? . . . Mrs. Millar, you can't deny that Christ said that . . . and you are a Christian woman."

"Yes, sir, he did say that; but you must remember he was only a bachelor."

I think I fell back in my chair and looked at my laundress in amazement, until she began to wonder what was the matter, and she must have wondered the more when I told her she had said something which I should never forget.

"But what I said is true, isn't it?" she answered shyly.

"Yes, it's quite true, only nobody ever thought of it before, Mrs. Millar. It's true that the married man who brings home his wages at the end of the week is the one that understands life, and you are quite right

to condone Christ's laxity in not pronouncing a fuller condemnation. You are quite right. The bachelor may not attain to any full comprehension of the 'ome."

She left the room, confused and wondering at my praise, thinking that she had answered as everybody would have answered, and conscious of having expressed national sentiments.

Dear Irish Edward was shocked by Mrs. Millar's theology at first, but hearing that she was a pious woman, he roused a little, and lest he might reproach Protestantism for its married clergy, I reminded him that Rome still retained married clergy in Greece. His answer was that he was sure the Greek priests abstained from their wives before their ministrations, an answer that rejoiced my heart exceedingly, and set me thinking that the Western mind has never been able to assimilate, or even understand the ideas that Christianity brought from the East. Our notions of the value of chastity are crude enough, and the Brahmin would lift his eyes in silent contempt on hearing from a priest that a man, if he lives chastely, though he be a glutton and a drunkard, will never descend to so low a stage of materialism as he that lives with a woman . . . even if his life be strict. The oddest of all animals is man; in him, as in all other animals, the sexual interest is the strongest; yet the desire is inveterate in him to reject it; and I am sure that Christ's words that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage have taken a great weight off Edward's mind, and must have inspired in him many prayers for a small stool in heaven. If by any chance he should not get one (which is, of course, unthinkable) and finds himself among the damned, his plight will be worse than ever, for I believe no theologian has yet decided that the damned do not continue to commit the sins in hell which they were damned for committing on earth.

Edward always leads me to think of the Middle Ages, but he also leads me to think sometimes of the ages that preceded these. There are survivals of pagan rites in Christianity, and in every man there is a survival of the pagan that preceded him; paganism is primordial fire, and it is always breaking through the Christian crust. We know of the eruption that took place in Italy in the sixteenth century, and, though the pagan Edward lies in durance vile, Edward is, in common with every other human being, no more than a pagan overlaid with Christianity. If three men meet in *The Heather Field* to speak of the misfortune that comes to a man when he allows himself to be inveigled by woman's beauty, they express, every one of them, a craving for some higher beauty, and this craving finds beautiful expression in the scene between Carden Tyrrell and his brother; and the same craving for some beauty, half imagined, something which the world has lost, is the theme of *Maeve*. She renounces earthly love, and dreams of a hero of Celtic romance, and in her last sleep he visits her at the head of a wonderful assemblage. Edward's paganism finds fuller expression in *The Enchanted Sea* than in any other play. In the depths of green sea-water, we catch sight of the face of the beautiful boy, Guy, whose drowning causes Lord Mark such blinding despair that he walks like one enchanted into the sea, and is carried away by the waves. More in this play than in the others do we catch a glimpse of the author's earlier soul, for every soul proceeds out of paganism; only in Edward the twain are more distinct; neither has absorbed the other, both exist contemporaneously and side by side—a Greek marble may be found enfolded in a friar's frock.

CHAP. VII.

THOUGH we could find nothing of interest to say about Rothenburg, we did not wish to leave the town in a slighting silence, so I asked Edward if he thought that living among medieval aspects influenced the children playing, and if it were possible to feel sure that the Rothenburgian mind could be as effective in modern life as the Berlin, or the Carlsbad, or the Dresden? Edward would like to have indulged in the dream that life in a medieval town could only produce a beautiful mind, and a long discussion sprang up between us, I maintaining that it were better to live in a modern town like Düsseldorf, in which there is only one picture—Holbein's "Holy Family"—than to live in a medieval town like Rothenburg, where there is nothing but roofs and old lanterns, Edward declaring that art is traditional, and where there is no tradition there can be no art, and, though it was not likely that Rothenburg would produce an impressionist painter——

"There is no saying that Rothenburg might not produce another Cranach, or, better still, another Luther. And you would not mind sacrificing some red roofs to save Europe from another heresy."

Edward did not seem to like my remark, though he could not deny its truth. It proved me, he said, to be a shallow nature, and whenever I was being cornered in an argument I tried to banter my way out.

"Continue, my dear friend; but I don't see your point."

"Nor do I see yours," he answered—I thought somewhat testily. "Rothenburg is a Gothic town, and you don't approve of the Gothic. Is your proposal to turn the people out of Rothenburg and keep the place as a museum? You wouldn't destroy it, I suppose?"

"Destroy it! No," I answered. "But if it can be shown that medieval surroundings are not altogether

a healthy influence upon children, do you not think that some opportunity should be given to them for contrasting the old with the new, if some part of the town, for instance, were modernized? "

It is possible that the reader will think that I was rather tiresome that day, but so was the train, and to while away the time there was no resource but to raise the question whether Rothenburg would have produced the same Edward as Galway. But the question did not succeed in provoking any of those psychological admissions that make him so agreeable a travelling companion. He was not in a communicative mood that afternoon, and to draw him out I was obliged to remind him that Bavaria is Protestant and Catholic, and strangely intermixed, for the two sects use the same church—service at eleven and Mass at twelve.

" And you might have been brought up a Protestant, Edward, or half and half."

A grave look came into his face, and he answered that if he hadn't been brought up a Catholic, and severely, he might have gone to pieces altogether; and I sat pondering the very interesting question whether Edward would have done better as a Protestant than as a Catholic. Every man knows himself better than anyone else can know him, and Edward seemed to think that he needed a stay. Perhaps so, but there is a vein of thought—perhaps I should say of feeling—in him which Catholicism seems to me to have restrained, and which Protestantism, I like to think, would have encouraged. The effect of religion upon character was worth considering, and as there was nothing else to do in the train I set myself to think the matter out.

But it is hard to set bounds on one's thoughts, and mine suddenly turned from Edward, and I found myself wondering if the great genius towards whom we were going could have written *The Ring* in Rothenburg. Now

this was a question which had to be put to Edward, and at once, and he applied himself to it, pointing out that Bayreuth was nearly as quaint and slumberous as Rothenburg, yet Wagner had written part of *The Ring* in Bayreuth. True that he had written parts of it all over Europe; some of it was written in Switzerland, some in Italy, some even in Dorset Square.

"But if he had been born in Rothenburg and had never left it——"

The noise of the train prevented me from catching his answer, and leaning back in my seat, I fell to thinking of the extraordinary joy and interest that Bayreuth had been in my life ever since Edward and I went there for the first time at the beginning of the 'nineties, after hearing a performance of *The Ring* in London.

It was the horns announcing the Rhine that reawakened my musical conscience. The melodies of my own country I had never heard. Offenbach and Hervé stirred me to music when we went to live in London, and I carried to Paris all their little tunes in my head. Painters are often more or less musicians: one drifted into our studio, and he introduced me to the Circle des Mirlitons, where I heard Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart. Classical music ousted operetta; and as long as there were musical friends about, music was followed with as much interest as could be spared from the art of painting. But when the maladministration of my affairs called me from Paris to Ireland musical interests disappeared with my French friends; they were driven underground when agrarian outrages compelled me to consider the possibility of earning my living. The only way open to me was literature, so I went to London to learn to write, as has been told in an earlier chapter and in an earlier book.

In London literature and poverty absorbed me for several years, and I had forgotten music altogether when Edward asked me if I would go to hear *The Rhinegold*.

I had consented, regretting my promise almost as soon as it was given, for Wagner was reputed as unmelodious and difficult to all except the most erudite, and fearing that I should be bored for several hours by sounds which would mean nothing to me, I began to seek for excuses, and to ask Edward if he could not dispose of the ticket he had taken for me. He could not do this, and as my plaints did not cease, he said to me, as we walked up King's Bench Walk:

"Well, there's no use your coming. All my pleasure will be spoilt."

The dark theatre reminded me of the rooms at exhibitions in which bad pictures are exhibited, no light showing anywhere except on the picture itself; but the moment the horns gave out the theme of the Rhine my attention was arrested, and a few minutes after it was clear that new birth awaited me. A day or two later I heard *Tristan,* and it so happened that there were performances at Bayreuth that year, so Edward and I went there together, and we have gone there many times since, each visit awakening every little musical faculty in me, and developing it; and though nothing can be created, a seed can be developed prodigiously, and a taste likewise, if the soil be fertile and circumstances fortunate. They were certainly favourable to my picking up this lost interest. Edward is a true melomaniac, loving all good music, and ready to travel anywhere to hear music; then there is Dujardin, who is always talking to me about music; his friends are musicians, and whenever I go to Paris I am with musicians, talking about music when not listening to it, so, even if my love of music were less than it is, in self-defence it would be necessary for me to cultivate it. And in an atmosphere of music my life began to unfold again. Life should continue to unfold, and it will be time enough for Death to lower the banner when the last stitch of canvas is reached.

Now I was going to Bayreuth again, determined to understand *The Ring* a little better than heretofore. But was this possible? I can learn until somebody tries to teach me; all the same every man is at tether, and lying back in my seat in the train from Rothenburg, a little weary of conversation with Edward, I relinquished myself to regrets that my ear only allows me to hear the surface of the music, the motives which float up to the top, the transforming effect of a chord upon a melodic phrase. I can hear that Wagner's melodies arise naturally one out of the other. If I could not hear that every melody in *Tristan* rises out of the one that preceded it, Wagner would have written in vain, so far as I was concerned. My ear is but rudimentary, an ear that will seem like no ear to those who can hear the whole orchestra together and in detail, seeing in their mind's eye the notes that every instrument is playing. It is well to have their ears, but mere ear will not carry anybody very far; to appreciate music an intelligence is necessary; and those who are not gifted with too much ear can hear the music oftener than those who can read it. Dukas told me last year, in Paris, that he would not go to hear some music with me because he had read it, and once he had read a piece of music there was nothing left in it for him.

Wagner is so essentially human that there is something in his art for everybody, something in his music for me, and a great deal for musicians; and besides the music, some part of which everybody except the tone-deaf can hear, there are the dramas, wonderful in conception and literary art; for him who can see beyond the text there are scenes in *The Ring* as beautiful as any in Shakespeare, for sure; and Dujardin, were he pressed to state his real feeling on the subject, would affirm that nothing has been written in words as moving as the scene when Brünnehilde goes to tell Siegmund, whom she finds watching over the sleeping Sieglinde, that he has been sum-

moned to Walhalla. "It is not the music," Dujardin cries—"no, it is not the music that counts in the scene, but the words. The music is beautiful, of course it is—it couldn't be otherwise; but Wagner was aware of the beauty of the poetry, and allowed it to transpire."

One can think about Dujardin and Wagner for ever and ever without the time appearing long; it passes without one feeling it; and I had forgotten a very important matter about which there had been a great deal of correspondence, till I was suddenly reminded of it by a slackening in the speed of the train.

At the time I am writing of, Bayreuth was an uncomfortable town to live in; it has changed a good deal within the last ten years, though it is still without a large hotel full of plate-glass and ferns and Liberty silks, with tennis-grounds and golf-links. In the twentieth century one gets better food in the restaurants than one did in the nineteenth, and bath-rooms have begun to appear, and the fly-haunted privy is nearly extinct. And this was the important matter that the slackening of the train's speed had reminded me of. We had written many letters, and had many interviews with the agent who apportions out the lodgings, and my last words had been to him, "A clean privy!" He had promised that he would see to it, but from the direction in which the coachman was driving us, it would seem that the desirable accommodation was not procurable in the town. It was Edward who noticed that our coachman was heading straight for the country, and standing up in the carriage, he began to expostulate—ineffectually, however, for Edward's German is limited and the driver only laughed, pointing with a whip towards a hillside facing the theatre, and there we saw a villa embowered and overlooking a cornfield, a lodging so delightful that I could not but feel interested in Edward's objection to it.

"We shall be out of the way of everything," was all he shrieked.

"But not out of the way of the theatre!" I interjected. "We shall walk through the cornfields to it."

"The theatre isn't everything."

"Everything in Bayreuth . . . surely."

He spoke of his breakfast. He wouldn't be able to get it. He must be near a restaurant, and the cornfield did not appeal to his sense of the picturesque as Rothenburg did. Despite my entreaty, he stood up again in the carriage, and began to expostulate with the driver again, who, however, only laughed and pointed with his whip, pouring forth all the while a torrent of Bavarian German which Edward could not understand.

"How shall I stop him?" he cried, turning to me, who can speak no single word of German. After mentioning this fact, I reminded him that the people in the villa were waiting for us, and for us to go away to the town without advising them might prevent them from letting their lodgings. I said this, knowing Edward's weak spot—his moral conscience. He fell to my arrow, answering quietly that he would willingly pay for the lodging on the hillside if I would only go with him to the town in search of another. To this I consented, unwillingly, I admit, but I consented. My unwillingness, however, to live in the town, where all the decent lodgings had long ago been taken, became more marked when we were shown into a large drawing-room and two bedrooms, the cleanest we had ever seen in Bayreuth.

"We shall want a room in which to write *The Tale of a Town.*"

The mention of his play did not seem to soften Edward, and the landlord, an elderly man, who had relinquished me because I knew no German at all, attached himself to Edward—literally attached himself, taking him by the lappet of his coat; and I remember how the old man

drew him along with him to the end of a passage, I following them, compelled by curiosity. We came to a door, which the old man threw open with a flourish, exhibiting to our enchanted gaze a brand-new water-closet, all varnish and cleanliness, and the pride of the old man, who entered into a long explanation, the general drift of which only pierced Edward's understanding. "He says he has redecorated the privy for us at the special request of Mr. Schulz Curtis. But if we pay him for his lodging!"

"No mere payment will recompense him. Remember, he asked you if you liked the wall-paper. He may have spent hours choosing it."

But, blind to all the allurements of the checkered paper, Edward insisted on telling the landlord that he wished to live near a restaurant where he could get his breakfast. The German again caught him by the lappet of his coat, and there was a pretty German girl who knew a little English, the old man's daughter, smiling in the doorway, about whom I had already begun to think. But it was impossible to dissuade Edward, and we drove with our luggage here and there and everywhere, seeking a couple of rooms. It would be inopportune to describe every filthy suite of apartments that we visited; but it is not well, in a book of this kind, to omit any vivid memory, and among my memories none is more vivid than that of an iron railing dividing a sort of shallow area from the street in which some workmen were drinking beer, and of the kitchen beyond it. Uncouth women, round in the back as wash-tubs, walked about with frying-pans in their hands, great udders floating under blue blouses; and we followed a trail of inferior German cookery up a black slimy staircase to the first landing, where a bald-headed waiter, with large drops of sweat upon his brow, opened a door, exhibiting for our inspection two low-ceilinged rooms with high beds in the corners.

"Ask him if we can have clean sheets."

"We have no others," the waiter answered.

As I moved towards the doorway, I heard Edward saying that the rooms would do us very well, and when I explained to him their disadvantages, he answered that he would be able to get his breakfast. "To get his breakfast!" The phrase seemed so Irish, so Catholic, that for a moment it was impossible to suppress my anger at Edward's unseemly indifference to my sense of cleanliness and comfort, and the women in the kitchen, the waiter, and the sheets horrified me, even to the extent of compelling me to tell him that I would sooner go back to England, giving up *The Ring, Parsifal*——

"I would sooner sleep anywhere, Edward; in the streets! Let us get away. Perhaps we shall find——"

"No, you'll object to all."

"But why, Edward, should you stay here? You can have breakfast at our lodging."

"I shan't be able to get an omelette. Can't you understand that people have habits?"

"Habits!" I said.

And then he admitted—it seemed to me somewhat unwillingly, no doubt because he was talking to a heretic—that the villa under the lindens was two miles from the chapel, and that he liked to go to Mass in the morning.

"I see; it is the magician and his house that tempts you."

"If you talk like that you'll make me regret I came abroad with you."

But, unable to restrain myself, I added:

"The desire to have a magician always at one's elbow is extraordinary."

"I know the value of such talk as that," he growled, as we drove back to the villa, and he seemed so much put about that he gained my sympathy, almost to the

extent of persuading me that I, and not he, was the inconsiderate one; and I began to defend myself.

"It would have been impossible to eat anything that came out of that kitchen. The magician must have a very strong hold upon you to——"

Edward is so good-humoured that one cannot resist the temptation to tease and to twit him, though one knows that one will regret doing so afterwards; and, sorry already, seeing how seriously he felt this unexpected dislocation in his habits, I began to think how I might be kind, and, rightly or wrongly, mentioned his play, asking him when he would like to consider it with me. Without answering my question, he went into his room and began to rummage in his trunk, coming back, however, with the manuscript, which he handed to me.

"Now, Edward, there is the second act——"

"You don't want to alter that, do you? I thought it the best act——"

He did not seem to appreciate my criticism or to pick up my suggestions. He was not very forthcoming, and we went to bed early that evening. "He'll be in a more literary humour to-morrow morning," I said, before going to sleep, and looked forward to a long *séance de collaboration* after breakfast. But Edward would accept no breakfast in the house, only a cup of tea and a thin slice of bread and butter. He refused to ask the landlord's daughter, who attended upon us, if she could make an omelette, for some reason which it is impossible for me even to guess at. It would not be like him to go without breakfast, so that he might make me feel I had seriously inconvenienced him, and it seemed difficult to understand why he should refuse to breakfast in the house. The people were willing to cook him anything he wanted. Was he such a slave to habits that he had to breakfast in a restaurant? No, for when he was at home he had to breakfast in his own house. He would say that was

different. So I was forced to fall back on the theory that he was annoyed because he would have to walk two miles to chapel to hear Mass. But when he was in Galway he did not go to Mass every morning. So why did he wish to go to Mass every day in Bayreuth? Why would he refuse to discuss the question any further, saying that it didn't matter, that it was all right, and, after sipping his tea, steal away for the greater part of the day, leaving me alone with *The Tale of a Town?* A *séance de collaboration* would have passed the morning nicely for me, and I muttered: "He has taken his soul out, or his soul has taken him out. Would that his soul would betake itself to literature! He has gone away without saying a word about *The Tale of a Town.*"

It did not strike me until late in the afternoon that he had gone away to avoid criticism of his play; but on reflection it hardly seemed that I was behoven to accept literary sensitiveness as a reason for absence. Yeats had told him, and I had told him, and Lady Gregory had told him, that the play could not be acted by the Irish Literary Theatre in its present form. It would have to be altered, and at Aix-la-Chapelle, at Boppart, and at Mainz, and in the long train journey from Mainz to Nuremberg, he had seemed willing to accept some of my criticism as just. *Et alors?* Had he begun to examine my criticism, picking it to pieces, arriving gradually at the conclusion that it was all wrong, and that his play was all right? Or was it that he had persuaded himself that it were better to retain his own mistakes than to accept my suggestions, even if they were improvements? A view of art for which a great deal may be said when the artist has arrived at maturity of thought and expression, but a very dangerous one when the artist is but a beginner.

"And Edward is a beginner, and he isn't progressing," I said, "and may remain a beginner." For he came into

the world a sketch, *une ébauche* by a great master, and was left unfinished, whether by design or accident it is impossible to say. A delightful study he is! And in the embowered villa I sat, looking into his mind, interested in its unmapped spaces (Australia used to interest me in much the same manner when I was a child) until the young girl came upstairs to tell me it was time to go to the theatre. One knows a single word—*Spielhaus*. My eyes went to the clock, the hands pointed to four, and from four to five is the hottest hour of a summer's day. By four the sun, blazing forth from a cloudless sky, has sucked all the cool of the night away, and heated unendurably every brick and tile and stone it can strike with a ray. Even in the shady villa under the lindens one could not think of the tall gables in the town, the fierce sun beating on them, or of the cobble-stones in the streets, without congratulating oneself that Edward's inclinations had been resisted. Those low-ceilinged rooms above the kitchen would stifle on such a day, and I was able to look back on my courage with admiration. It had given me a splendid view of a cornfield with reapers working in it, the sun shining on their backs—that one straightening himself to wipe the sweat from his brow with a ragged sleeve.

And while walking through the cornfield I remembered a letter to Bülow in which the Master says: "One thing is certain—I am not a musician," meaning thereby that music was only part of his message. He tells in these words that his art enjoined separation from the drone of daily life, and that is why he chose Bayreuth, a small Bavarian town difficult to get at, but not impossible to reach. It had a train service even in Wagner's time, and there were a sufficient number of dirty inns and lodgings in the town to house the pilgrims. Humanity was an open book to the Master, and the hardships he was inflicting on his pilgrims he knew to be for their good, for it

would induce in them the disposition of mind suitable for the reception of the sacramental *Ring*. And while building his theatre on the brow of the hill in the shade of the pines, there can be no doubt that he foresaw the added charm it would be to the pilgrims to leave the town and plod through the glare up the long street past the railway-station into the avenue of chestnut-trees. He foresaw them, pausing in their ascent, leaning upon their staves; and the restaurant which he allowed to be built next his theatre is a tribute to his perfect understanding of men, for however beautiful his music might be he knew that none could listen to it for five hours upon an empty belly. He liked, I am sure, the little green-painted restaurant higher up the hill in the orchard close, and must have gone there himself and sat under the trees, drinking Rhenish wine mixed with cool water from stone jars. The Master, who thought of everything, must have foreseen the great charm it would be to walk through the pine-wood, seeing beyond the red bark of the trees the purple ranges of hills that enclose the great plain, slope after slope rising at evening, and no one too far distant for the eye to follow the noble shapes and all the delicate sinuosities travelling down the skyline. Every shape and every outline are visible between the acts of *The Valkyrie, Siegfried,* and the *Götterdämmerung*. The village standing in the middle of the plain is often lighted by a last ray. Between the acts an extraordinary harmony gathers; art and Nature abandon their accustomed strife, and with ears filled with calm, exalted melodies, our eyes follow the beautiful landscape in which Bayreuth stands.

There are off-days at Bayreuth when there are no performances, and these are pleasant days of rest, that give us time to think of what we have heard, and what we are going to hear, and time to stroll about the town admiring its German life. The town is more interesting than Rothenburg—to me at least—for it is less archaic.

One cannot imagine oneself living in the fifteenth century, whereas one can imagine oneself living at the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth. Bayreuth is out-of-date. *Suranné,* as the French say. A sorrow clings about the word, it conveys a sense of autumn, of "the long decline of the roses." And there is something ghostlike in the "out-of-date." The great gables which show themselves against the blue skies at Bayreuth mean more to me than the red-tiled roofs with the dormer windows in Rothenburg, for I can imagine myself born in Bayreuth, or growing up in it, and living there, seeing the Margrave and his Court. It would be pleasant to live under the protection of a Margrave. One asks the name of the last, and wonders what he was like in his *Schloss,* a melancholy building full of tall official portraits and heavy German furniture, surrounded by gardens full of trees in which there is artificial water and swans. The year I am writing of the swans were followed by a brood of cygnets, and we used to watch these, not Edward and I, but myself and the daughter of a great painter, one who has inherited some of the intensity of her father's early pictures—a woman loving music dearly, and travelling with her husband in search of it.

It was pleasant to leave *The Tale of a Town* and visit her, and to walk about under the sunlit trees, or through the town, or to visit with her the old Court Theatre, perhaps picking up Edward on the way there and taking him along with us.

He will always go to see a building, and though we had both visited the Court Theatre many times before, it was pleasant to see it again, and she and he and I together admired its pillared front and its quaint interior, German rococo, clumsy, quaint, heavy, but representative of the German mind. And together we admired the gilded cupids, the garlands of flowers and the little boxes on

either side of the stage, whence the Margrave's trumpeters used to appear to announce his arrival—a theatre not intended for the populace, but for the Court, containing only fifty or sixty stalls, beautifully designed and comfortable withal. The gilded balconies reminded us of drawing-rooms; we spoke of the courtly air of the theatre, now forbidden to the mime for many a day. A beautiful little theatre, we said—a theatre designed for the performance of Mozart or Gluck's operas, and I think Edward would have given up some performances of *Parsifal* to hear Gluck or Mozart in this out-of-date theatre.

In the afternoon my friends suggested to us that we should accompany them to a village some six or seven miles distant, and we went there in a carriage drawn by two long-tailed Bavarian horses, that drew us slowly but surely out of Bayreuth along smooth white roads, every one lined with apple-trees and loaded with fruit. It was a wonder to us how these trees were not despoiled by thieves, so easy would it be to carry away the fruit by night. In England, in Ireland, or in Scotland a great deal of the fruit would certainly have been robbed, and we asked ourselves if the Bavarian peasants are more naturally honest than the English, or if it were mere custom that prevented the waggoner from gathering as many apples as he pleased. The lady's husband, who is a politician, suggested that these wayside trees belonged to the community, and he is no doubt right; and we accepted his explanation that the honesty of the Bavarian is to be found in the fact that everybody shared in the fruit, and this being so, it was nobody's interest to strip the trees.

Behold the trees, and the long undivided plain stretching away to the foot of the hills, without wall or hedge, and we asking ourselves how do the peasants distinguish between the different farms, and somebody telling how one

of his farmers had called another to admire a fence he had put up between their lands. "I'd like the fence, aye, twice as well, if thee 'ad not taken in some six or seven inches of my land." In our appreciation of the German landscape there is to be reckoned our disappointment at seeing nowhere beautiful English trees—ash, elm, beech and oak—only the pine, and we, being tree-lovers, think the pine a tedious tree, if it can be called a tree; it isn't in our apprehension of one, only being intended by Nature for what the French call *bois charpentier*. No man would care to sit under a pine (and a woman still less), needles underfoot and needles overhead. To us English folk the beauty of a wood is as much in the underwoods as in the tall trees, and the pine allows no underwood. In a pine-wood one meets few birds. A goshawk, startled from the branches, flees quickly down the long aisles. The pine is cultivated in Germany; the unfortunate pine, ugly by nature, is made still more ugly by cultivation. Pines cover the lower hills, forming black stains in the landscape and disfiguring their purple.

The long-tailed Bavarian horses walked up some steep ascent, trotted down a hill, at the bottom of which a pretty brook purls through an orchard, and the village was reached at last, built under the foot of a steep black hill, on which stand the ruins of a castle. There are paths through the woods, and one becomes conscious of the ceaseless change in human life as one follows the paths to the gateway of the robber-baron who lived there three centuries ago, defying Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, until his castle was battered with cannon. It was fortunate for Adolphus that he had cannon to batter it with, for without cannon he would not have captured it.

We came upon a ravine, and on each hillside a wooden platform had been built; the orchestra playing in the pit between, no doubt, as in the theatre at Bayreuth.

We strolled up and down the steep paths, wondering if the players were heard from hillside to hillside, inclining to the belief that human voices would not carry so far, and to put the natural acoustics of the wood to a test, some went to the other hillside and spoke to us. But what play had been acted in this wood? Somebody suggested a miracle play, and leaping at the suggestion, I spoke of the miracle plays in Oberammergau.

"Some pious people of your sect, Edward," I said, taking his arm, "who would set Asiatic gods against native divinities."

My aphorism was not at first understood, and I explained it—how Bavaria comprises two spectacles: the Asiatic gods in the South of the Tyrolean frontier, while the original Rhine gods display themselves in the North at Bayreuth—Wotan, Loki, Donner, Froh, and the goddesses Frika, Erda, and Freia. My remark had some success, and we walked on, wondering how it was that this division of the deities had not been remarked before. All were interested except Edward, who said he did not care to listen to blasphemy.

"But, my dear Edward, it cannot be blasphemy to tell the truth, and surely the gods at Oberammergau exhibits are Asiatic. And there can be no doubt that the gods that Bayreuth exhibits are German and Scandinavian"; and I pressed Edward to explain to me how a mere statement of fact, the truth of which could not be contested, could be called blasphemous, falsehood being implicit in every blasphemy. To escape from this quandary Edward began to argue that the Rhenish gods had come from Asia, too, by way of Scandinavia, finding solace, apparently, in the belief in the Asiatic origin of all gods. We laughed at this novel defence of divinity.

"It is like China tea," I answered, "only grown in Asia." Somebody else spoke of Havana cigars, and very soon all interest died out of the argument. We were but

vaguely interested in it, for none amongst us, perhaps not even the youngest, was entirely free from the thought inspired by the empty platforms. We were all thinking how every generation is but a pageant, that all is but pageant here below. Part of our excursion was already behind us, and in later years how little of it would be remembered! Such philosophies are soon exhausted, and we sympathized with a lady who was anxious about her daughter and husband. They were walking in the woods, and she feared they might be overtaken by the coming darkness. But we assured her there would be light for many hours still, and whistled the motives of *The Ring*. . . .

We returned through the hilly country, with the wide, sloping evening above us, and apple-trees lining the roads, all the apples now reddened and ready for gathering. We admired the purple crests illuminated by the sunset, as millions of men and women had done before us, and as millions of men and women shall do after us. Voices dropped and faces grew pensive. We asked if we should ever meet at Bayreuth again, and our thoughts turned towards the great Master lying in his grave, whose dreams had given us such sweet realities.

"Too soon over," somebody said. In a few days Bayreuth would be a deserted town, deserted like the platforms we had found in the wood. The long distance we had come was mentioned, and somebody asked if the pleasure we had received were worth the journey. The answer made to this—and it was a woman who made it—was that the journey would be more real in six months' time than it was to-day, and picking up the thought, I answered quickly:

"So you think that we must live not so much for the moment as for the sake of the memory of it?"

Somebody answered that memory was, perhaps, half of life, and this was denied.

"He who cannot enjoy things as they go by is but a poor companion."

"A poor lover," I suggested. And soon after found myself arguing that the great gift Nature has bestowed upon woman is the power of enjoying things as they go by—a great gift truly it is, and sufficient compensation for lack of interest in religion and morals. It may be that that is why women have not written a great book, or painted a great picture.

"Or invented a religion," someone interjected.

"Women are not idealists," Edward said, speaking out of his remembrance of his play *The Heather Field.*

In the evening we were all going to the house that Wagner had lived in, and in which he had written the last act of *Siegfried,* the *Götterdämmerung,* and *Parsifal.* Everyone who goes to Bayreuth is asked there if he leaves a card upon Madame Wagner. Such, at least, used to be the custom. One presented an invitation card at the door and walked about the music-room and into Wagner's library. Edward was much moved to see the Master's books and his writing-table. Things interest him more than human beings, whereas Wagner's books and writing-table merely depressed me, and refusing to follow Edward to the grave, I sought for a friend who might introduce me to Madame Wagner.

A tall, thin woman, nearer sixty than seventy, very vital, with a high nose like her father's, came forward to meet me, full of cordiality, full of conversation and pleasant greeting. "Liszt lives again in her," I said, "the same inveigling manner; she casts her spell like her father, and——" Well, there is no way of telling my impression except to tell the thought that passed through my mind: it was, But how is all this to end? Am I going to run away with her? And when we arrive somewhere, what am I to do with her? A woman nearly seventy years! And I thought what an extraordinary fascination

she must have been when she heard *Tristan* for the first time, and felt she could no longer live with Bülow.

"It is always pleasant," she said, "to welcome to Bayreuth strangers who come to hear 'our art.'"

The arrogance of the expression amused me, but after all music is the art of Germany just as poetry is art of England; and feeling in the next five minutes that I must either take her hand or interrupt the conversation, I chose the latter course, and asked her to introduce me to her son. She hastened to comply with my wish, and put herself to some trouble to find him. He was found at last, and I was introduced to him.

My impression of Madame Wagner is compressed in the "Am I going to run away with her?" And the same words, with a change of preposition and pronoun, will describe the impression that Siegfried Wagner produced upon me. The son is the father in everything except his genius—the same large head, the same brow, the same chin and jaw. "A sort of deserted shrine!" I cried to myself, and gasped for words.

Van Roy was singing at the time, and I succeeded at last in asking Siegfried Wagner who had composed the song.

"I do not know, but it should be by Grandpapa Liszt."

I bowed, thanked him, and moved away, glad to escape from his repelling blankness. Shyness it may have been, or perhaps boredom. If we had met at Venice or in London —anywhere except in that crowd, we might have become friends. So I was glad to meet him on the bench in front of the theatre, and to find him slightly more forthcoming than he had shown himself to me in his mother's house. We spoke about his opera, and about Ellis, who had translated his libretto, and for a moment it looked as if we were going to know each other, to become acquainted, for in answer to my question whether he thought it was of advantage that the musician should write his own libretto,

he answered that he thought it was, for while writing the libretto the musician sang his first ideas of the music.

Meeting me again on the same seat at the same hour, he asked me why I was not in the theatre, and it only occurred to me to tell the mere truth, that I came to Bayreuth to hear *The Ring* and not *Parsifal*. "Perhaps if you knew the score of *Parsifal*."

"I can never know a score, for I'm not a musician, but I've heard it many times, and it makes no personal appeal as do the other works."

The explanation was received in silence, and I thought how I might have better explained my position if I had said that, though I recognized Milton to be a great poet, he wrote in vain so far as I was concerned. But Siegfried's manner checks the words upon one's lips, and the people began to come out of the theatre soon after.

We parted, and all the way to the café where Edward and I went to have supper I turned Siegfried over in my mind and understood him to be a man of talent, for he is the son of a man of genius. One must be a man of talent to conduct *The Ring* as I had heard him conduct it, bearing the last scene of *The Valkyrie* along with him like a banner. A man of talent, the son of a man of genius, without sufficient vitality to be very much interested in anything; his life a sort of diffused sadness like a blank summer day when the clouds are low; and he must be conscious, too, that there is no place on earth where he can lay his head and call it his own.

"If the physical resemblance were not so marked," I said to myself as we entered the café.

That little café! What enchanting hours Edward and I have spent in it between half past ten and one in the morning, amid beer and cigars and endless discussions as to the values of certain scenes and acts, of singers and conductors! The year that I am now referring to *Parsifal* was conducted in turn by Fischer, Mottl, and Seidl, Wag-

ner's favourite pupil and disciple. He sat in the far end of the café by himself, and I often wondered why his society was not more sought after. Although he was an old man, and in declining health, it was a pleasure for me to sit with him and engage him in conversation, telling him that under his direction the first act of *Parsifal* played ten minutes quicker that it did under Mottl, and that Mottl was five minutes quicker than Fischer.

"So much as that?"

"Yes, I took the time. And how much better I like your conducting of *The Flower Maidens!* Mottl gets a crescendo in the middle."

"Whereas there is no necessity. It goes as well without, doesn't it?"

A thin, spare man, quiet, speaking but little—a kindly man, as the reader has already guessed from the few phrases exchanged between him and me, and an unassuming man, apparently taking an interest even in such appreciations as Edward's and mine; a man between sixty and seventy, at the time I am speaking of, and as I write this line I can see his small, refined features and his iron-grey hair, which once must have been black. My thoughts pause, and I like to indulge myself in the regret that I did not walk home with him in the evenings to his lodgings. He might have asked me to come to see him in the morning, and over the piano, perhaps, would have told me many things of interest regarding his relations with Wagner and his understanding of music, and things about himself, for Seidl lived among great men, and looked upon himself as a failure, and that is just the man that is so interesting to inveigle into confessions.

He died a year or two later, and the café is no longer as interesting as it was when all the actors came down from the theatre to eat their supper there. Klafsky was my first Brünnehilde; when she died Gulbranson took her place, and the moment she came into the café all eyes

went towards her, and I may say all hearts, for very soon a beautiful smile would light up a round, rosy, very ordinary face, suffusing it, transforming a plain woman into one to whom one's heart goes instinctively, convinced that all that is necessary to be happy is to be with her.

CHAP. VIII.

WE take tickets for a cycle, a *Ring,* and as many *Parsifals* as we have appetite for, and when the last performance is over the railway-station is crowded; no longer with the Bohemianism of London and Paris, but with the snobbery (I use the word in its French sense) of both capitals. The trolleys are piled with aristocratic luggage, and the porters are followed by anxious valets; ladies in long, fashionable dust-cloaks and beset by maids with jewel-cases in their hands. Among this titled crowd one can still pick out the student (the professional musician still goes to Bayreuth) and those who really love music, and who go to Bayreuth for the art of the Master—like our friends, the politician and his wife and daughter.

Between the acts of the *Götterdämmerung* we had heard arrangements being made to be present at other music festivals. It seemed that a considerable part of the audience was going to Munich to hear Mozart. For the last day or two everybody seemed to be muttering *Cosi fan Tutti,* an opera never given in England. On a former occasion Edward and I had gone to Munich, but we had not heard it; and I would have preferred to follow Mozart, but we were going in a different direction, in quest of other music—northward, a long and tedious journey. For Edward had decided that the revival of drama which the success of *The Heather Field* had started in Ireland must be accompanied by a revival of all the arts—painting, sculpture, and music. For landscape and portrait painting he thought he could rely on Dermod O'Brien, who

had decided to come to Ireland. A number of chapels had been spoilt by German stained glass, but Miss Purser had promised to engage a man whose father had been intimately connected with the Pre-Raphaelite movement in England, and under her direction ecclesiastical art would flourish again in Ireland. John Hughes would revive Donatello and Edward Palestrina. He told me that Archbishop Walshe had been approached, and that he thought he would be able to persuade him to accept a donation of ten thousand pounds to establish a choir in the cathedral upon the strict understanding, of course, that the choir was only to sing Vittoria, Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Francesca de Pres, and the other writers, bearing equally picturesque names, that had, if I may borrow a phrase from *Evelyn Innes*, gravitated round the great Roman composer.

It seemed to me that the analogy he drew between the Italian Renaissance and the Irish was a false one. The Italians had imported nothing, but had re-created all the arts simultaneously. This view was, however, not acceptable, and in the return journey between Nuremberg and Mainz, Edward pointed out that the Italian Renaissance was not as original as it seemed at first sight. It was indebted largely to antiquity, and its flavour was due to the spirit of the Middle Ages which still lingered in the sixteenth century, and in support of this theory he affirmed that Palestrina had used plain chant melodies in all his Masses.

"Turning them into pattern music," I interjected. "If you want religion in music, let your choir sing only plain chant."

Edward feared that the congregation would deem that monotonous, and I said, "If concessions are going to be made——," and the conversation dropped.

We were going to a festival of pattern music far away in the North of Germany, to a town called Münster,

whither, I venture to say, very few have ever wandered, though it is well known by name, on account of Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète*. We all know the prayer that the prophet sings at the end of the third act before he enters the town, and the great beauty of the fourth act—the cathedral scene in which John of Leyden refuses to recognize his mother. A great act! It was not the fashion of those times to write fifth acts, and Meyerbeer finished his opera with a couple of songs of no great merit, and the blowing up of the town by John of Leyden, who perishes amid the ruins.

But in history he perished quite differently. After a few weeks of revelry Münster was taken by assault, and John of Leyden and his companions were put into iron cages, in which they could neither stand, nor sit, nor lie, and in them they remained on exhibition, hung up some thirty feet above the pavement of the principal street, for three days, before they were torn to pieces with red-hot hooks, by order of the good Bishop. These cages still hang in the principal street, regarded, no doubt, as objects of great historical interest. That they are that no one will contest, yet one cannot help feeling that they would be better out of sight in a museum, for they certainly inspire hatred of the Roman Church in the heart of every passer-by, and it is hardly going too far to say that to these cages, and to the memories which they evoke, are owing the preservation of all the original aspects of the town, so grey and austere, without a sign anywhere of life, of modern thought or aspiration, without a picture-gallery, without a painter, without a writer, a fitting town, indeed, for a festival of archaic music.

Edward had written to his conductor, the man to whom the revival of Palestrina was to be intrusted, to come over, and when we were not in the cathedral—which was not often—we used to spend the time wandering about the grey, calico-coloured streets, Edward admiring

the fifteenth-century roofs, of which there were a great many, and the arcades, the conductor and myself thinking how the minutes were bringing us nearer another concert. He was a man of quiet and neutral intelligence, and it would have been pleasant to go away for a walk in the country with him. He would have liked to escape from the patter of this archaic music which he already foresaw it was his fate to teach and conduct till the end of his days. But to slip away between a *Gloria* and a *Credo* (my suggestion to him) would have offended his burly task-master and perhaps have lost him his job. He dared not even show for one instant that the music bored him, and I hardly dared either, and resisted Edward with difficulty at the door of the cathedral. The choice lay between a motet by Josquin des Pres and *The Tale of a Town*. The third act needed revision, and I not infrequently took the manuscript away with me and forgot it in the pleasant shade of the avenue that encircles the town; and sometimes I took the manuscript with me to the Zoological Gardens, beguiled there by the finest lion ever known, that is to say, the finest ever seen or imagined by me—an extraordinary, silent and monumental beast that used to lie, his paw tucked in front of him, a gazing-stock for me and a group of children. We moved on subdued by his wonderful presence, majestic, magnificent, forlorn, ashamed before his great, brown, melancholy eyes, full of dreams of the desert of long ago, perhaps of the very day when an Arab held him, a whelp, well above the high, red-pommelled saddle, and the dam was speared and shot by other Arabs in the mêlée that happened amid some loose rocks and brushwood.

The blue sky of Münster, and the dust of Münster, and the silence and the loneliness of Münster, often made me think I should like to enter his cage. It was such a splendid one!—built out into the garden, a little park with two tree-trunks and some rocks, a dome-shaped cage

in which the great beast could trot or climb, if he were so disposed, but I never saw him except sunning himself in front of his bars. He seemed as lonely as myself, and I often imagined us two together, side by side, *The Tale of a Town* in my left hand, reading it aloud, while with the right I combed his great brown mane for him. Which would he resent—the reading or the combing? Speculation on this point interested me, and urged me towards the risk, and perhaps might have induced me to undertake it, if I had not met a fox in the circular avenue. The red, bushy animal used to come there on a chain with his master, a young peasant. His master sat on the other end of the bench on which I was sitting, and the fox often hopped up between us, treating me with the politeness due to a visitor, a politeness which was requited next day by a cutlet. On cutlets our friendship throve until the end of the week, and had I known German it might have become permanent. The fox seemed quite willing, for though well-behaved with his master, his affection for me was so spontaneous that I think it would have lasted. The peasant, too, might have been persuaded to sell his fox, and if he refused a sovereign it would be because he did not know its value, or because he would not include the chain. As this point could not be settled without some knowledge of German, I strove to explain to him by signs that he was to remain where he was, until I brought back somebody who could *sprechen Deutsch*. There was no hope of a passer-by who could speak English—there were no passers-by; the whole population of Münster was in the cathedral. It had been going there all the morning, headed by Edward and his conductor, to hear several Masses by Palestrina, and they had started off again in the afternoon to listen to Orlando di Lasso. Edward had pressed me to accompany them, saying that the opportunity might not occur again to hear a work by that great Fleming; but one concert a day of contrapuntal

music was enough for me, and I had pleaded my duty regarding a possible reconstruction of the third act, which I was anxious to submit to him in the evening.

"He is in the cathedral, listening," I said. "He must be tired by this of Orlando di Lasso, and will be glad of an excuse to get away."

When I arrived a motet by Orlando was being sung. My curiosity was awakened; I listened, forgetful of the fox, and very soon it began to seem to me strange that so beautiful a name should be allied to such ugly music. So I fell to thinking how a theory often goes down before a simple fact. It had been mine this long while that a man's work proceeds from his name; and still forgetful of the fox, I pondered the question whether Orlando di Lasso was, or was not, a beautiful name, deciding at last that it was an affected name, and therefore not beautiful; whereas Palestrina is naturally beautiful, like his music. Palestrina! There is a sound of strings in the name, and he could not have failed to write beautifully for the strings if he had written for instruments. "Palestrina! Strings! Strings!" I murmured, seeking Edward, and finding him without much difficulty, so striking is his appearance when he sits listening, his hand to his ear, an old melomaniac, drinking in the music. As soon as my errand was whispered he shook his head, saying that he could not leave just now, for the choir were going to sing another motet by Orlando di Lasso, and when that motet was finished there was one by Nannini, which he would not like to miss.

"The peasant will never wait so long," I said many a time as I lingered about the church; and when all the motets were finished, and we returned to the avenue, the peasant and his fox were far away, and there was no means of discovering them. The lion? Well, he is dead now—dead and buried; and that is all I remember of a town which I praise God I shall never see again!

As a recompense for having accompanied him to hear the contrapuntalists, Edward was coming with me to see Rubens. We should not arrive in Antwerp until late that night. Edward lay sleeping opposite; it seemed strange that anyone should be able to sleep while on his way to Rubens; and I thought of the picture we were going to see. It seemed extraordinary, inconceivable, impossible that to-morrow I should walk down a street into a cathedral, and find myself face to face with "The Descent from the Cross." "Edward sleeps, but art keeps me awake."

My thoughts turned to Florence and Stella, whom I had arranged to meet in the cathedral; and to pass the time I very soon began to ask myself which I would retain, if the choice were forced upon me—the immense joy of the picture, or the pleasure of meeting two amiable and charming women? In the ordinary course of my days there could be no hesitation, but Edward had been my sole companion for the last six weeks, and in our journeys abroad he imposed acceptance of this rule upon me—that no acquaintances should be made among the flocks of English and American women that congregate in the Continental hotels. I had always abided by this rule of the road, leaving him when the strain became too great —at Dresden some years before, and some years later again at Munich. Those separations had been effected without difficulty. Edward never complains; only once did he mention that I had broken up our tours, as he would put it, for the pleasure of some abandoned woman; and so in this tour it had been a point of honour with me to allow it, at all costs to my feelings, to run its natural course. As it was to end at Antwerp I was well within my rights to arrange to meet Florence and Stella in the cathedral. I say "well within," for my friends did not belong to the class of women to which Edward took special objection—women whose sole morality seemed to

him to be to yield to every impulse of the heart. My friends were painters, and of considerable talent, and in Edward's eyes art redeems sex of much of its unpleasantness. He knew nothing of the meeting, and it did not seem to me worth while to mention it as we walked down the street. It would be stupid to interrupt our emotion by introducing any contentious question. We were going to see Rubens, in what is perhaps his lordliest achievement; and when the cathedral came in sight, I laid my hand suddenly on Edward's shoulder, stopping him to say:

"Edward, isn't it wonderful that we should this moment be walking down a street to see Rubens? Let us never forget it. Let us try to fix it in our memories now before we enter."

Rubens for the moment blotted out all remembrance of Florence and Stella, but as we wandered round the cathedral, memory of them returned to me, and my heart misgave me, for I was beginning to think of Stella perhaps more than was altogether fair to Florence. To confide such scruples as these to Edward would at once prejudice him against both women, and I wanted him to like them. So, with the intention to deceive, I continued to æstheticize, speaking of the beauty of the drooping body as it slips down the white sheet into the arms of devoted women. The art of Greece, we said, re-arisen in Florence, and carried to Antwerp on the calm, overflowing genius of a Fleming. We contrasted this picture, so restrained and concentrated, with the somewhat gross violence of "The Ascent of the Cross," painted immediately on his return from Italy, his first abandonment to his native genius, before he had discovered himself. "The Crowning of the Virgin" is said to have been repainted in some places. Edward was anxious to know if it were so, but art-criticism is difficult when one is expecting two ladies. Though one knows they will not wilfully disap-

point, there is always a danger that something may happen to prevent them from coming. The picture is one of the most enchanting that Rubens ever painted. He seems to have forgotten the theological aspects of the subject, and to have remembered only that much of it which is nearest to his heart—a beautiful woman surrounded by beautiful children—and to have painted with no other intention than to make beautiful fair faces, clouds and pale draperies seem more beautiful. The ease and grace of his incomparable handicraft held my attention while looking round for Stella, tall and shapely, and Florence, whom Nature has not made less well, but on a smaller scale. At last two backs were perceived in a distant chapel. The moment had therefore come to tell Edward that I had just caught sight of two ladies, acquaintances, artists both of them.

"I must go and speak to them. Shall I bring them back and introduce them? They are artists."

Somewhat to my surprise, Edward did not raise any objection to meeting them; on the contrary, he said that it would be interesting to hear them talk about the pictures. He showed himself very affable to both, speaking to Florence about the supposed repainting of "The Crowning of the Virgin," and to Stella about the quality of the black behind the Magdalen's head in "The Descent from the Cross." At the door of the cathedral I mentioned that I was lunching with the ladies, and he consented to join us, and when the ladies left us, he made complimentary observations regarding their demeanour and intelligences, asking several questions about their work, and not one about their private lives.

After lunch we went to the exhibition of Van Dyck's works which was being held at Antwerp that year, and after viewing his monotonous portraits one after the other, the residual impression left on the mind was of a painting lackey, an impersonal mind transcribing an

impersonal world. Something less vulgar, more individual, I declared, we should find at Ghent, a small town in Flanders, renowned because of its possession of one of the world's masterpieces, Van Eyck's "Adoration of the Lamb." And we went thither accompanied by Edward, who had not seen the picture. It astonishes the painter as nothing else in the world can, except, perhaps, the miracle that decrees to flowers their shapes and hues. We visited other towns and saw some fine Memlings; but better than those do I remember the afternoon that I walked with Stella up a long grey platform (Edward walked with Florence), telling her that I should deem my life worthless if she did not allow me to accompany her to Holland. As I have said, my tour with Edward had been arranged to end at Antwerp, so the change from Edward's society to that of these ladies would prove beneficial to me, as much for intellectual as for sensuous reasons. I am penetrated through and through by an intelligent, passionate, dreamy interest in sex, going much deeper than the mere rutting instinct; and turn to women as a plant does to the light, as unconsciously, breathing them through every pore, and my writings are but the exhalation that follows the inspiration. I am, in contrast to Edward, an essentially social being, taking pleasure in, and deriving profit from, my fellows. But he is independent of society, and we both suffer from the defects of our qualities. The moments of loneliness that fall upon me at the close of a long day's work are unknown to him. He has never experienced that spiritual terror which drives me out after dinner in search of somebody to talk to. A book and a cigar (I have never been able to smoke a pipe) are not enough for me, and the hours between nine and midnight are always redoubtable hours. How they are to be whiled away is my problem. I admire and envy Edward's taste for reading. That bulky man can return to his rooms, even in the height of summer,

light half a dozen candles (he does not like a lamp) and sit down behind a lofty screen (draughts give him colds) with a long clay between his teeth and a book on æsthetics in his hand, and read till midnight. And that, night after night, his life going by all the while. It is true that he pays for his contentment. His mind began to harden before he was forty, and I had to warn him of the precipice towards which he was going: "One cannot change oneself," he answered. He is glad to see me if I call, but he feels no special need of my society. One day I said: "Edward, which would you prefer to spend the evening with—a very clever woman, or a stupid man?" After three or four puffs at his pipe he answered: "With the stupid man."

But man, no more than woman, is necessary to him. Is not his self-sufficientness (if I may coin a word) admirable? Never have I known it fail him. At Dresden, it is true that he expressed regret that I was leaving him in the middle of our tour; but how shallow that regret was can be gathered from the indifference with which he accepted the news of my decision to accompany the ladies to Holland. We asked him if he would come with us, but he said that important business awaited him in Ireland; and he told me privately that he was not frightened away by the ladies, but he did not care to go to a Protestant country, for he never felt at home in one, and he did not even seem to understand when I asked him if he minded the long journey to Ireland alone.

"I shall be with you in Tillyra a month later, and we shall then be able to make the necessary alterations in *The Tale of a Town.*"

At the mention of the alterations in his play his face clouded, but he did not betray that anxiety which would have approven him a true artist. "Only an amateur," I said, and went away with the ladies, our intention being to study the art of the Low Countries in Amsterdam, in

Haarlem, and The Hague; to stop at every town in which there was a picture-gallery. An account of our æsthetic and sentimental tour would make a charming book; our appreciations of Ruysdael, Hals, Rembrandt and Van de Meer, and Florence's incautious confession that no more perfect mould of body than Stella's existed in the flesh—perhaps in some antique statues of the prime, though even that was not certain.

CHAP. IX.

"THE scene you want me to write isn't at all in character with the Irish people."

"So you've said, Edward. We talked the matter out at Rothenburg, but men's instincts are the same all over the world. If you don't feel the scene, perhaps it would be as well if you allowed me to sketch it out for you. It is all quite clear. . . . Just as you like."

Edward said he didn't mind, and I went up to my bedroom, and came down about tea-time to look for him, anxious to read the pages I had written. He consented to hear the scene, but it seemed to me that he listened to it resentfully; and when I had finished, it did not surprise me to hear that he didn't like it at all; and then he begged of me, almost hysterically, not to press my alteration upon him, crying aloud, "Leave me my play!" Then, turning suddenly, he thanked me effusively for the trouble I had taken, and besought me to try to understand that he couldn't act otherwise, assigning as a reason that I was giving the play a different colour from what he intended.

"I'm sorry. But what is to be done? You admit the play requires alteration?"

"Yes, but I can make the alterations myself." And away he went up the slippery staircase of the old castle to his study.

For it is in the old castle that he prefers to live; the modern house, which he built some five-and-twenty years ago, remaining always outside his natural sympathies, especially its drawing-room. But one cannot have a modern house without a drawing-room, or a drawing-room without upholstered furniture, and the comfort of a stuffed arm-chair does not compensate Edward for its lack of design; and he prefers that his hinder-parts should suffer rather than his spirit. Every drawing-room is, in the first glance, a woman's room—the original harem thrown open to visitors—and his instinct is to get away from women, and all things which evoke intimacy with women. He was always the same, even in his hunting days, avoiding a display of horsemanship in front of a big wall, "if women were about." It was in these early days, when the stables were filled with hunters, that I first went to Tillyra; and walking on the lawn, I remember trying to persuade him that the eighteenth-century house, which one of his ancestors had built alongside of the old castle, on the decline of brigandage, would be sufficient for his wants.

"For you don't intend to become a country gentleman, do you?"

That he might escape from Tillyra had clearly never occurred to him, and he was startled by the idea suggested by me that he should follow his instinct. But the sea sucks back the wave, and he murmured the old house had decayed and a new one was required.

"If you spend a few hundred pounds upon the old house it will last your lifetime, my dear friend; and it is in much better taste than any house you will build. You think that modern domestic Gothic will be in keeping with the old fortress!"

He must have suspected I was right, for his next argument was that the contract had been signed, and to break it would cost several hundred pounds. "Better

pay several hundred than several thousand, and your Gothic house will cost you twenty, and never will it please you."

For a moment it seemed as if he were going to reconsider the matter, and then he adduced a last argument in favour of the building: his mother wished it.

"But, my dear friend, unless you're going to marry, so large a house will be a burden."

"Going to marry!"

"Well, everybody will look upon you as an engaged man."

A shadow crossed his face, and I said: "I've touched the vital spot," and rebellion against all authority being my instinct, I incited him to rebel.

"After all, your mother has no right to ask you to spend so much money, and she wouldn't do so unless she thought you were going to marry."

"I suppose she wouldn't."

But not on that occasion, nor any other, could I induce him to throw the architect's plans into the fire, and why blame him for his lack of courage? For it is natural to man to yield something of himself in order that there may be peace in his home. (Edward yields completely to authority once he has accepted it.) His mother's clear and resolute mind was perhaps more sympathetic to me than to him, and turning to her, in my officiousness, I said, thinking to frighten her: "Will that house be finished for fifteen thousand?"

"The painting and the papering aren't included in the estimate; but a few thousands more will finish it, and I have promised to finish it for him."

That the spending of so much money should cost her no scruple whatever surprised me, and to explain her to myself I remembered that she belonged to a time when property was secured to its owner by laws. The Land Acts, which were then coming into operation, could not

change her point of view. Edward must build a large and substantial house of family importance, and when this house was finished he could not do otherwise than marry. She would ask all the young ladies of her acquaintance to come to see them, and among the many Edward might find one to his liking. This hope often transpired in her talks about Edward, and she continued to cherish it during the building of the house, in spite of her suspicions that Edward's celibacy was something more than the whim of a young man who thinks that a woman might rob him of his ideals. She could not admit to herself any more than you can, reader, or myself, that we came into the world made as it were to order, contrived so that we shall run down certain lines of conduct. We are not determinists, except in casual moments of no importance, and like to attribute at least our misfortunes to circumstance, never looking beyond the years of childhood, just as if the greater part of man's making was not done before he came into the world. Edward was a bachelor before he left his mother's womb. But how was his mother to know such a thing—or to sympathize with such an idea? All the instruction we get from the beginning of our lives is to the effect that man is free, and our every action seems so voluntary that we cannot understand that our lives are determined for us. Another illusion is that nothing is permanent in us, that all is subject to change. Edward's mother shared this illusion, but for a much shorter time than many another woman would have done, partly because her intelligence allowed her to perceive much, and to understand much that would have escaped an inferior woman, and partly because Edward never tried to hide his real self, wearing always his aversion on his sleeve. So it could not have been later than two years after the building of the house that the first thought crossed her mind, that, though she had ruled Edward in every detail of his daily life since he

was a little boy, she might still fail to reach the end which she regarded as the legitimate end of life—a wife for her son, and grandchildren for herself.

"He has built a modern house, but before it is quite finished he has decided to live in the old tower," she said to me, and the furniture which had been made for his sitting-room filled her, I could see, with dread. A less intelligent woman would have drawn no conclusions from the fact that a table taken from a design by Albert Dürer, and six oaken stools with terrifying edges, were to be the furniture of the turret chamber, reached by cold, moist, winding stairs, and that his bedroom, too, was to be among the ancient walls. "Look at his bed," she said, "as narrow as a monk's; and the walls whitewashed like a cell, and nothing upon them but a crucifix. He speaks of his aversion from upholstery, and he can't abide a cushion."

"She has begun to understand that there are certain natures which cannot be changed," I said to myself. "She understands in her subconscious nature already, soon she will understand with her intellect, that he, who lies in that bed by choice, will never leave it for a bridal chamber."

Life affords no more interesting drama than when the fate of temperament irrevocably separates two people bound together by the closest natural ties, and the charm is heightened when each is sensitive to the duty which each bears the other, when each is anxious to perform his or her part of the contract; and the drama is still further heightened when both become aware that they must go through life together without any hope that they will ever understand each other better. This drama is curious and interesting to the looker-on, who is able to appreciate the qualities of the mother and the son; the son's imaginative temperament always in excess of, and overruling, his reason, and his mother's clear, practical

intelligence, always unable to understand that her son must live the life that his nature ordained him to live. Again and again, in the course of our long friendship, he has said: "If you had been brought up as severely as I was . . ." A sudden scruple of conscience, or shyness of soul, stays the end of the phrase on his large loose mouth. But by brooding on his words I understand them to mean that his mother imposed obedience upon him by appealing to his fear of God, and aggravating this fear by a severe training in religious dogma. It is easy to do this; a little child's mind is so sensitive and so unprotected by reason that a stern mother is one of the great perils of birth. If the boy is a natural boy with healthy love of sex in his body, the wife or mistress will redeem him from his mother, but if there be no such love in him he stands in great danger; for from woman's influence the son of man may not escape; and it would seem that whoever avoids the wife falls into the arms of the mistress, and he who avoids the wife and mistress becomes his mother's bond-slave.

Edward was in his tower, and wandering about the park, I thought how he had gone back to his original self since his mother's death. The schoolboy was a Republican, but the church is not friendly to free-thought, and the prestige of his mother's authority had prevented him from taking any active part in Nationalist politics during her lifetime. "The wild heather," I said, "is breaking out again"; and I stopped in my walk, so that I might think how wonderful all this was—the craving of a somewhat timid nature for independence, yet always held back, never being able to cast out of the mouth the bit that had been placed in it. These weak, ambiguous natures lend themselves so much more to literature, and, indeed, to friendship, than the stronger, who follow their own instincts, thinking always with their own brains. They get what they want, the others get nothing; but the weak men

are the more interesting: they excite our sentiments, our pity, and without pity man may not live.

Then, a little weary of thinking of Edward, my thoughts turned to Yeats. He had come over to Tillyra from Coole a few days before, and had read us *The Shadowy Waters,* a poem that he had been working on for more than seven years, using it as a receptacle or storehouse for all the fancies that had crossed his mind during that time, and these were so numerous that the pirate-ship ranging the Shadowy Waters came to us laden to the gunnel with Fomorians, beaked and unbeaked, spirits of Good and Evil of various repute, and, so far as we could understand the poem, these accompanied a metaphysical pirate of ancient Ireland cruising in the unknown waters of the North Sea in search of some ultimate kingdom. We admitted to Yeats, Edward and I, that no audience would be able to discover the story of the play, and we confessed ourselves among the baffled that would sit bewildered and go out raging against the poet. Our criticism did not appear to surprise Yeats; he seemed to realize that he had knotted and entangled his skein till no remedy short of breaking some of the threads would avail, and he eagerly accepted my proposal to go over to Coole to talk out the poem with him, and to redeem it, if possible, from the Fomorians. He would regret their picturesque appearance; but could I get rid of them, without losing the poetical passages? He would not like the words "poetical passages"—I should have written "beautiful verses."

Looking up at the ivied embrasure of the tower where Edward was undergoing the degradation of fancying himself a lover so that he might write the big scene between Jasper and Millicent at the end of the third act, I said: "He will not come out of that tower until dinner-time, so I may as well ride over to Coole and try what can be done. But the job Yeats has set me is a difficult one."

Away I went on my bicycle, up and down the switch-back road, trying to arrive at some definite idea regarding Fomorians, and thinking, as I rode up the long drive, that perhaps Yeats might not be at home, and to return to Tillyra without meeting the Fomorians would be like riding home from hunting after a blank day.

The servant told me that he had gone for one of his constitutionals, and would be found about the lake. The fabled woods of Coole are thick hazel coverts, with tall trees here and there, but the paths are easy to follow, and turning out of one of these into the open, I came upon a tall black figure standing at the edge of the lake, wearing a cloak which fell in straight folds to his knees, looking like a great umbrella forgotten by some picnic party.

"I've come to relieve you of Fomorians, and when they've been flung into the waters we must find some simple and suggestive anecdote. Now, Yeats, I'm listening."

As he proceeded to unfold his dreams to me I perceived that all doors were locked and windows barred.

"The chimney is stopped," I said, "but a brick seems loose in that corner. Perhaps by scraping——"

And we scraped a little while; but very soon a poetical passage turned the edge of my chisel like a lump of granite, and Yeats said:

"I can't sacrifice that."

"Well, let us try the left-hand corner."

And after scraping for some time we met another poetical passage.

"Well, let us try one of the tiles under the bed; we might scrape our way into some drain which will lead us out."

But after searching for a loose tile for an hour, and finding none, all proving more firmly cemented than any reader would think for, the task of getting Yeats out of

the prison-house which he had so ingeniously built about himself, began to grow wearisome, and my thoughts wandered from the Fomorians to the autumn landscape, full of wonderful silence and colour, and I begged Yeats to admire with me the still lake filled with the broad shadow of the hill, and the ghostly moon high up in the pale evening, looking down upon a drift of rose-coloured clouds. A reed growing some yards from the shore threw its slender shadow to our feet, and it seemed to me that we could do nothing better than to watch the landscape fixed in the lake as in a mirror.

But Yeats' mind was whirling with Fomorians, and he strove to engage my attention with a new scheme of reconstruction. He had already proposed, and I had rejected so many that the last one was undistinguishable in my brain from those which had preceded it, and his febrile and somewhat hysterical imagination, excited as if by a drug, set him talking, and so volubly, that I could not help thinking of the old gentleman that Yeats had frightened when he was staying last at Tillyra. The old gentleman had come down in the morning, pale and tired, after a sleepless night, complaining that he had been dreaming of Neptune and surging waves.

"Last night," said Yeats, looking up gloomily from his breakfast, "I felt a great deal of aridness in my nature, and need of moisture, and was making most tremendous invocations with water, and am not surprised that they should have affected the adjoining room."

The old gentleman leant back in his chair, terror-stricken, and taking Edward aside after breakfast he said to him: "A Finnish sorcerer; he has Finnish blood in him; some Finnish ancestor about a thousand years ago." And with the old gentleman's words in my head, I scrutinized my friend's hands and face, thinking them strangely dark for Ireland. But there are Celts with hair of Oriental blackness, and skins dyed with Oriental

yellow. All the same, the old gentleman's reading of Yeats' prehistoric ancestry seemed to me like an intuition. His black hair and yellow skin were perhaps accidents, or they might be atavisms. It was not the recurrence of any Finnish strain of a thousand years ago that tempted me to believe in a strain of Oriental blood; it was his subtle, metaphysical mind, so unlike anything I had ever met in a European, but which I had once met in an Oriental years ago in West Kensington, in a back drawing-room, lecturing to groups of women—an Indian of slender body and refined face, a being whose ancestry were weaving metaphysical arguments when painted savages prowled in the forests of Britain and Ireland. He seemed to be speaking out of a long metaphysical ancestry; unpremeditated speech flowed like silk from a spool, leading me through the labyrinth of the subconscious, higher and higher, seemingly towards some daylight finer than had ever appeared in the valleys out of which I was clambering hurriedly, lest I should lose the thread that led me. On and on we went, until at last it seemed to me that I stood among the clouds; clouds filled with the valleys beneath me, and about me were wide spaces, and no horizon anywhere, only space, and in the midst of this space light breaking through the clouds above me, waxing every moment to an intenser day; and every moment the Indian's voice seemed to lead me higher, and every moment it seemed that I could follow it no longer. The homely earth that I knew had faded, and I waited expectant among the peaks, until at last, taken with a sudden fear that if I lingered any longer I might never see again a cottage at the end of an embowered lane, I started to my feet and fled.

But the five minutes I had spent in that drawing-room in West Kensington were not forgotten; and now by the side of the lake, hearing Yeats explain the meaning of his metaphysical pirate afloat on Northern waters, it

seemed to me I was listening again to my Indian. Again I found myself raised above the earth into the clouds; once more the light was playing round me, lambent light like rays, crossing and recrossing, waxing and waning, until I cried out, " I'm breathing too fine air for my lungs. Let me go back." And, sitting down on a rock, I began to talk of the fish in the lake, asking Yeats if the autumn weather were not beautiful, saying anything that came into my head, for his thoughts were whirling too rapidly, and a moment was required for me to recover from a mental dizziness.

In this moment of respite, without warning, I discovered myself thinking of a coachman washing his carriage in the mews, for when the coachman washes his carriage a wheel is lifted from the ground, and it spins at the least touch of the mop, turning as fast as Yeats' mind, and for the same reason, that neither is turning anything. I am alluding now to the last half-hour spent with Yeats, talking about his poem; and thinking of Yeats' mind like a wheel lifted from the ground, it was impossible for my thoughts not to veer round to Edward's slow mind, and to compare it to the creaking wheel of an ox-waggon.

" If one could only combine these two—one is an intellect without a temperament to sustain it, the other is a temperament without an intellect to guide it "; and I reflected how provokingly Nature separates qualities which are essential, one to the other; and there being food for reflection in this thought, I began to regret Yeats' presence. Very soon his mind would begin to whirl again. " The slightest touch," I said, " of the coachman's mop will set it going, so I had better remain silent."

It was then that I forgot Yeats and Edward and everything else in the delight caused by a great clamour of wings, and the snowy plumage of thirty-six great birds rushing down the lake, striving to rise from its

surface. At last their wings caught the air, and after floating about the lake they settled in a distant corner where they thought they could rest undisturbed. Thirty-six swans rising out of a lake, and floating around it, and settling down in it is an unusual sight; it conveys a suggestion of fairyland, perhaps because thirty-six wild swans are so different from the silly china swan which sometimes floats and hisses in melancholy whiteness up and down a stone basin. That is all we know of swans—all I knew until the thirty-six rose out of the hushed lake at our feet, and prompted me to turn to Yeats, saying, "You're writing your poem in its natural atmosphere." To avoid talking about the poem again, and because I am always interested in natural things, I begged of him to tell me whence this flock had come, and if they were really wild swans; and he told me that they were descended originally from a pair of tame swans who had re-acquired their power of flight, and that the thirty-six flew backwards and forwards from Coole to Lough Couter, venturing farther, visiting many of the lakes of Galway and Mayo, but always returning in the autumn to Coole.

We struck across the meadows to avoid the corner of the lake where the swans had settled, and Yeats proposed another scheme for the reconstruction of his poem, and it absorbed him so utterly that he could feel no interest in the smell of burning weeds, redolent of autumn, coming from an adjoining field. Yet it trailed along the damp meadows, rising into the dry air till it seemed a pity to trouble about a poem when Nature provided one so beautiful for our entertainment—incense of weeds and faint colours, and every colour and every odour in accordance with my mood.

How pathetic the long willow leaves seemed to me as they floated on the lake! and I wondered, for there was not a wind in the branches. So why had they fallen? . . . Yeats said he would row me across, thereby saving

a long walk, enabling us to get to Tillyra an hour sooner than if we followed the lake's edge. Remember, it was still day, though the moon shed a light down the vague water, but when we reached the other side the sky had darkened, and it was neither daytime nor night-time. The fields stretched out, dim and solitary and grey, and seeing cattle moving mysteriously in the shadows, I thought of the extraordinary oneness of things—the cattle being a little nearer to the earth than we, a little farther than the rocks—and I begged of Yeats to admire the mystery. But he could not meditate; he was still among his Fomorians; and we scrambled through some hawthorns over a ruined wall, I thinking of the time when masons were building that wall, and how quaint the little leaves of the hawthorns were, yellow as gold, fluttering from their stems.

"A ruined country," I said, "wilderness and weed."

Yeats knew the paths through the hazel-woods, and talking of the pirate, we struck through the open spaces, decorated with here and there a thorn-tree, and much drooping bracken, penetrating into the silence of the blood-red beeches, startled a little when a squirrel cracked a nut in the branch above us, and the broken shells fell at our feet.

"I thought there were no squirrels in Ireland?"

"Twenty years ago there was none, but somebody introduced a pair into Wexford, and gradually they have spread all over Ireland."

This and no more would he tell me, and falling into another broad path, where hazels grew on either side, it seemed to me that I should have walked through those woods that evening with some quiet woman, talking of a time long ago, some love-time which had grown distinct in the mirror of the years, like the landscape in the quiet waters of the lake. But in life nothing is perfect; there are no perfect moments, or very few, and it seemed to

me that I could no longer speak about Fomorians or pirates. Every combination had been tried, and my tired brain was fit for nothing but to muse on the beauty that was about me, the drift of clouds seen through the branches when I raised my head. But Yeats would not raise his eyes; he walked, his eyes fixed on the ground, still intent upon discovering some arrangement which would allow him to write his poem. Before we reached the end of the alley his whirling brain shot out another arrangement of the story, which it was impossible for me to advise him to adopt, it differing nowise from the fifty which had preceded it, and in despair I ran over the story again, just as one might run one's fingers down the keys of a piano, with this result—that in a hollow of the sloppy road which we were following he agreed to abandon the Fomorians; and discussing the harp of apple-wood, which could not be abandoned, we trudged on, myself interested in the stern line of the Burran Mountains showing on our left, and the moon high above the woods of Tillyra. "How much more interesting all this than his pirate," I thought. A shadowy form passed us now and then; a peasant returning from his work, his coat slung over his shoulder; a cow wandering in front of a girl, who curtseyed and drew her shawl over her head as she passed us.

"Yes, that will do," Yeats answered. "I shall lose a good many verses, but I suppose it can't be helped. Only, I don't like your ending."

The poem has since those days been reconstructed many times by Yeats, but he has always retained the original ending, which is, that after the massacre of the crew of the merchant galley, the Queen, who lay under the canopy when the vessel was boarded, was forced by spells, shed from the strings of a harp made of apple-wood, into a love so overwhelming for the pirate, that she consents to follow him in his quest of the ultimate kingdom in the

realms of the Pole. My ending was that her fancy for the pirate should yield before his determination to go northward, and that he should bid her step over the bulwarks into the merchant galley, where the pirates were drinking yellow ale; and then, cutting the ropes which lashed the vessels together, he should hoist a sail and go away northward. But Yeats said it would be a disgraceful act to send a beautiful woman to drink yellow ale with a drunken crew in the hold of a vessel.

So did we argue as we went towards Tillyra, the huge castle now showing aloft among the trees, a light still burning in the ivied embrasure where Edward sat struggling with the love-story of Jasper and Millicent.

"He, too, is an inferior artist; he will not yield himself to the love-story. Both of these men in different ways put their personal feelings in front of their work. They are both subaltern souls." And my thoughts turned from them to contemplate the huge pile which Edward's Norman ancestor had built in a hollow. "Why in a hollow?" I asked myself, for these Norman castles are generally built from hillside to hillside, and were evidently intended to overawe the country, the castles lending each other aid when wild hordes of Celts descended from the Burran Mountains; and when these raids ceased, probably in the seventeenth century, the castle's keep was turned into stables, and a modern house run up alongside of the central tower. Ireland is covered with ruins from the fifth to the eighteenth century.

"A land of ruin and weed," I said, and began to dream again a novel that I had relinquished years ago in the Temple, till rooks rising in thousands from the beech-trees interrupted my thoughts.

"We'd better go into this wood," I said. "Our shadows will seem to Edward from his casement window——"

"Somewhat critical," Yeats answered; and we turned

aside to talk of *The Tale of a Town,* Yeats anxious to know from me if there was any chance of Edward's being able to complete it by himself, and if he would accept any of the modifications I had suggested.

CHAP. X.

THE castle hall was empty and grey; only the autumn dusk in the Gothic window, and the shuffle of the octogenarian butler sounding very dismal as he pottered across the tessellated pavement. On learning from him that Mr. Martyn was still writing, I wandered from the organ into the morning-room, and sat by the fire, waiting for Edward's footstep. It came towards me about half an hour afterwards, heavy and ponderous, not at all like the step of the successful dramatist; and my suspicions that his third act was failing him were aggravated by his unwillingness to tell me about the alterations he was making in it. All he could tell me was that he had been in Maynooth last summer, and had heard the priests declaring that they refused to stultify themselves; and as the word seemed to him typical of the country he would put it frequently into the mouths of his politicians.

How drama was to arise out of the verb "to stultify" did not seem clear, and in the middle of my embarrassment he asked me where I had been all the afternoon, brightening up somewhat when I told him that I had been to Coole. In a curious detached way he is always eager for a gossip, and we talked of Yeats and Lady Gregory for a time, and our walk around the lake, Edward rousing from my description of the swans to ask me where I had left the poet.

"At the gate."

"Why didn't you ask him to stay for dinner?" And while I sought for an answer, he added: "Maybe it's

just as well you didn't, for to-day is Friday and the salmon I was expecting from Galway hasn't arrived."

"But Yeats and I aren't Catholics."

"My house is a Catholic house, and those who don't care to conform to the rule——"

"Your dogmatism exceeds that of an Archbishop"; and I told him that I had heard my father say that the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. McHale, had meat always on his table on Friday, and when he was asked how this was, he answered that he didn't know who had gotten dispensations and who hadn't. Edward muttered that he was not to be taken in by such remarks about dispensations; he knew very well I had never troubled to ask for one.

"Why should I, since I'm not a Catholic?"

"If you aren't a Catholic, why don't you become a Protestant?"

"In the first place one doesn't become a Protestant, one discovers oneself a Protestant; and it seems to me that an Agnostic has as much right to eat meat on Friday as a Protestant."

"Agnosticism isn't a religion. It contains no dogma."

"It comes to this, then: that you're going to make me dine off a couple of boiled eggs." And I walked about the room, indignant, but not because I care much about my food—two eggs and a potato are more agreeable to me in intelligent society than grouse would be in stupid. But two eggs and a potato forced down my throat on a theological fork in a Gothic house that had cost twenty thousand pounds to build—two eggs and a potato, without hope of cheese! The Irish do not eat cheese, and I am addicted to it, especially to Double Gloucester. In my school-days that cheese was a wonderful solace in my life, but after leaving school I asked for it in vain, and gave up hope of ever eating it again. It was not till the 'nineties that a waiter mentioned it. "Stilton, sir;

Chester, Double Gloucester——" "Double Gloucester! You have Double Gloucester! I thought it extinct. You have it? Then bring it," I cried, and so joyfully that he couldn't drag himself from my sight. An excellent cheese, I told him, but somewhat fallen from the high standard it had assumed in my imagination. Even so, if there had been a slice of Double Gloucester in the larder at Tillyra, I should not have minded the absence of the salmon, and if Edward had pleaded that his servants would be scandalized to see anyone who was supposed to be a Catholic eat meat on Fridays, I should have answered: "But everybody knows I'm not a Catholic. I've written it in half a dozen books." And if Edward had said: "But my servants don't read your books; I shall be obliged if you'll put up with fasting fare for once," I would have eaten an egg and a potato without murmur or remark. But to be told I must dine off two eggs and a potato, so that his conscience should not be troubled during the night, worried me, and I am afraid I cast many an angry look across the table. An apple-pie came up and some custards, and these soothed me; he discovered some marmalade in a cupboard, and Edward is such a sociable being when his pipe is alight, that I forgave his theological prejudices for the sake of his æsthetic. We peered into reproductions of Fra Angelico's frescoes, and studied Leonardo's sketches for draperies. Edward liked Ibsen from the beginning, and will like him to the end, and Swift. But he cannot abide Schumann's melodies. We had often talked of these great men and their works, but never did he talk as delightfully as on that Friday evening right on into Saturday morning. Nor was it till Sunday morning that his soul began to trouble him again. As I was finishing breakfast, he had the cheek to ask me to get ready to go to Mass.

"But, Edward, I don't believe in the Mass. My presence will be only——"

"Will you hold your tongue, George . . . and not give scandal," he answered, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Everybody knows that I don't believe in the Mass."

"If you aren't a Catholic, why don't you become a Protestant?" And he began pushing me from behind.

"I have told you before that one may become a Catholic, but one discovers oneself a Protestant. But why am I going to Gort?"

"Because you had the bad taste to describe our church in *A Drama in Muslin*, and to make such remarks about our parish priest that he said, if you showed yourself in Ardrahan again, he'd throw dirty water over you."

"If you send me to Gort, I shall be able to describe Father ——'s church."

"Will you not be delaying?"

"One word more. It isn't on account of my description of Father ——'s church that you won't take me to Ardrahan: the real reason is because, at your request, mind you, I asked Father —— not to spit upon your carpet when he came to dinner at Tillyra. You were afraid to ask a priest to refrain from any of his habits, and left the room."

"I only asked you to draw his attention to the spittoon."

"Which I did; but he said such things were only a botheration, and my admonitions on the virtue of cleanliness angered him so that he never——"

"You'll be late for Mass. And you, Whelan; now, are you listening to me? Do you hear me? You aren't to spare the whip. Away you go; you'll only be just in time. And you, Whelan, you're not to delay putting up the horse. Do you hear me?"

Whelan drove away rapidly, and when I looked back

I saw my friend hurrying across the park, tumbling into the sunk-fence in his anxiety not to miss the *Confiteor*, and Whelan, who saw the accident, too, feared that "the masther is after hurting himself." Happily this was not so. Edward was soon on his feet again, running across the field "like a hare," the driver said—out of politeness, I suppose.

"Hardly like a hare," I said, hoping to draw a more original simile from Whelan's rustic mind; but he only coughed a little, and shook up the reins which he held in a shapeless, freckled hand.

"Do you like the parish priest at Gort better than Father —— at Ardrahan?"

"They're well matched," Whelan answered—a thick-necked, long-bodied fellow with a rim of faded hair showing under a bowler-hat that must have been about the stables for years, collecting dust along the corn-bin and getting greasy in the harness-room. One reasoned that it must have been black once upon a time, and that Whelan must have been a young man long ago; and one reasoned that he must have shaved last week, or three weeks ago, for there was a stubble on his chin. But in spite of reason, Whelan seemed like something that had always been, some old rock that had lain among the bramble since the days of Finn MacCoole, and his sullenness seemed as permanent as that of the rocks, and his face, too, seemed like a worn rock, for it was without profile, and I could only catch sight of a great flabby ear and a red, freckled neck, about which was tied a woollen comforter that had once been white.

He answered my questions roughly, without troubling to turn his head, like a man who wishes to be left to himself; and acquiescing in his humour, I fell to thinking of Father James Browne, the parish priest of Carnacun in the 'sixties, and of the day that he came over to Moore Hall in his ragged cassock and battered biretta with

McHale's Irish translation of Homer under his arm, saying that the Archbishop had caught the Homeric ring in many a hexameter. My father smiled at the priest's enthusiasm, but I followed this tall, gaunt man, of picturesque appearance, whose large nose with tufted nostrils I remember to this day, into the Blue Room to ask him if the Irish were better than the Greek. He was a little loth to say it was not, but this rustic scholar did not carry patriotism into literature, and he admitted, on being pressed, that he liked the Greek better, and I listened to his great rotund voice pouring through his wide Irish mouth while he read me some eight or ten lines of Homer, calling my attention to the famous line that echoes the clash of the wave on the beach and the rustle of the shingle as the wave sinks back. My curiosity in McHale's translation interested him in me, and it was arranged soon after between him and my father that he should teach me Latin, and I rode a pony over every morning to a thatched cottage under ilex-trees, where the pleasantest hours of my childhood were spent in a parlour lined with books from floor to ceiling, reading there a little Virgil, and persuading an old priest into talk about Quintilian and Seneca. One day he spoke of Propertius, and the beauty of the name led me to ask Father James if I might read him, and not receiving a satisfactory answer, my curiosity was stimulated and Cæsar studied diligently for a month.

"Shall I know enough Latin in six months to read Propertius?"

"It will be many years before you will be able to read him. He is a very difficult writer."

"Could Martin Blake read Propertius?"

Martin Blake was Father James's other pupil, and these Blakes are neighbours of ours, and live on the far side of Carnacun. Father James was always telling me of the progress Martin was making in the Latin language, and

I was always asking Father James when I should overtake him, but he held out very little hope that it would be possible for me ever to outdo Martin in scholarship. He may have said this because he could not look upon me as a promising pupil, or he may have been moved by a hope to start a spirit of emulation in me. He was a wise old man, and the reader will wonder how it was that, with such a natural interest in languages and such excellent opportunities, I did not become a classical scholar; the reader's legitimate curiosity shall be satisfied.

One day Father James said the time would come when I would give up hunting—everything for the classics, and I rode home, elated, to tell my mother the prophecy. But she burst out laughing, leaving me in no doubt whatever that she looked upon Father James's idea of me as an excellent joke; and the tragedy of it all is that I accepted her casual point of view without consideration, carrying it almost at once into reality, playing truant instead of going to my Latin lesson. Father James, divested of his scholarship, became a mere priest in my eyes. I think that I avoided him, and am sure that I hardly ever saw him again, except at Mass.

A strange old church is Carnacun, built in the form of a cross, with whitewashed walls and some hardened earth for floor; and I should be hard set to discover in my childhood an earlier memory than the panelled roof, designed and paid for by my father, who had won the Chester Cup some years before. The last few hundred pounds of his good-fortune were spent in pitch-pine rafters and boards, and he provided a large picture of the Crucifixion, painted by my cousin, Jim Browne, who happened to be staying at Moore Hall at the time, from Tom Kelly the lodge-keeper, the first nude model that ever stood up in Mayo (Mayo has always led the way—Ireland's vanbird for sure). It was taken in great pomp from Moore Hall to Carnacun; and the hanging of it was

a great and punctilious affair. A board had to be nailed at the back whereby a rope could be attached to hoist it into the roof, and lo! Mickey Murphy drove a nail through one of the gilt leaves which served as a sort of frame for the picture. My father shouted his orders to the men in the roof that they were to draw up the picture very slowly, and, lest it should sway and get damaged in the swaying, strings were attached to it. My father and mother each held a string, and the third may have been held by Jim Browne, or perhaps I was allowed to hold it.

Some time afterwards a "Blessed Virgin" and a "St. Joseph" came down from Dublin, and they were painted and gilded by my father, and so beautifully, that they were the admiration of everyone for a very long while, and it was Jim Browne's "Crucifixion" and these anonymous statues that awakened my first æsthetic emotions. I used to look forward to seeing them all the way from Moore Hall to Carnacun—a bleak road as soon as our gate-lodge was passed: on one side a hill that looked as if it had been peeled; on the other some moist fields, divided by small stone walls, liked by me in those days, for they were excellent practice for my pony. Along this road our tenantry used to come from their villages, the women walking on one side (the married women in dark blue cloaks, the girls hiding their faces behind their shawls, carrying their boots in their hands, which they would put on in the chapel-yard), the men walking on the other side, the elderly men in traditional swallow-tail coats, knee-breeches, and worsted stockings; the young men in corduroy trousers and frieze coats. As we passed, the women curtseyed in their red petticoats; the young men lifted their round bowler-hats; but the old men stood by, their tall hats in their hands. At the bottom of every one was a red handkerchief, and I remember wisps of grey hair floating in the wind. Our tenantry met the

tenantry of Clogher and Tower Hill, and they all collected round the gateway of the chapel to admire the carriages of their landlords. We were received like royalty as we turned in the gates and went up the wooden staircase leading to the gallery, frequented by the privileged people of the parish—by us, and by our servants, the postmaster and postmistress from Ballyglass, and a few graziers. In the last pew were the police, and after the landlords these were the most respected.

As soon as we were settled in our pew the acolytes ventured from the sacristy tinkling their bells, the priest following, carrying the chalice covered with the veil. As the ceremony of the Mass was never of any interest to me, I used to spend my time looking over the pew into the body of the church, wondering at the herd of peasantry, trying to distinguish our own serfs among those from the Tower Hill and Clogher estates. Pat Plunket, a highly respectable tenant (he owned a small orchard), I could always discover; he knelt just under us, and in front of a bench, the only one in the body of the church, and about him collected those few that had begun to rise out of brutal indigence. Their dress and their food were slightly different from the commoner kind. Pat Plunket and Mickey Murphy, the carpenter, not the sawyer, were supposed to drink tea and eat hot cakes. The others breakfasted off Indian-meal porridge. And to Pat Plunket's bench used to come a tall woman, whose grace of body the long blue-black cloak of married life could not hide. I liked to wonder which among the men about her might be her husband. And a partial memory still lingers of a cripple that was allowed to avail himself of Pat Plunket's bench. His crutches were placed against the wall, and used to catch my eye, suggesting thoughts of what his embarrassment would be if they were taken away whilst he prayed. A great unknown horde of peasantry from Ballyglass and beyond

it knelt in the left-hand corner, and after the communion they came up the church with a great clatter of brogues to hear the sermon, leaving behind a hideous dwarf whom I could not take my eyes off, so strange was his waddle as he moved about the edge of the crowd, his huge mouth grinning all the time.

Our pew was the first on the right-hand side, and the pew behind us was the Clogher pew, and it was filled with girls—Helen, Livy, Lizzy, and May—the first girls I ever knew; and these are now under the sod—all except poor Livy, an old woman whom I sometimes meet out with her dog by the canal. In the first pew on the left was a red landlord with a frizzled beard and a perfectly handsome wife, and behind him was Joe McDonnell from Carnacun House, a great farmer, and the wonder of the church, so great was his belly. I can see these people dimly, like figures in the background of a picture; but the blind girl is as clear in my memory as if she were present. She used to kneel behind the Virgin's altar and the Communion rails, almost entirely hidden under an old shawl, grown green with age; and the event of every Sunday, at least for me, was to see her draw herself forward when the communion bell rang, and lift herself to receive the wafer that the priest placed upon her tongue, and having received it, she would sink back, overcome, overawed, and I used to wonder at her piety, and think of the long hours she spent sitting by the cabin-fire waiting for Sunday to come round again. On what roadside was that cabin? And did she come, led by some relative or friend, or finding her way down the road by herself? Questions that interested me more than anybody else, and it was only at the end of a long inquiry that I learnt that she came from one of the cabins opposite Carnacun House. Every time we passed that cabin I used to look out for her, thinking how I might catch sight of her in the doorway; but I never saw her except

in the chapel. Only once did we meet her as we drove to Ballyglass, groping her way, doubtless, to Carnacun. Where else would she be going? And hearing our horses' hoofs, she shrank closer to the wall, overawed, into the wet among the falling leaves.

As soon as the Communion was over Father James would come forward, and thrusting his hands under the alb (his favourite gesture) he would begin his sermon in Irish (in those days Irish was the language of the country among the peasantry), and we would sit for half an hour, wondering what were the terrible things he was saying, asking ourselves if it were pitchforks or ovens, or both, that he was talking; for the peasantry were groaning aloud, the women not infrequently falling on their knees, beating their breasts; and I remember being perplexed by the possibility that some few tenantry might be saved, for if that happened how should we meet them in heaven? For heaven's sake would they pass us by without lifting their hats and crying: "Long life to yer honour"?

My memories of Carnacun Chapel and Father James Browne were interrupted by a sudden lurching forward of the car, which nearly flung me into the road. Whelan apologized for himself and his horse, but I damned him, for I was annoyed at being awakened from my dream. There was no hope of being able to pick it up again, for the chapel bell was pealing down the empty landscape, calling the peasants from their desolate villages. It seemed to me that the Carnacun bell used to cry across the moist fields more cheerfully; there was a menace in the Gort bell as there is in the voice of a man who fears that he may not be obeyed, and this gave me an interest in the Mass I was going to hear. It would teach me something of the changes that had happened during my absence. The first thing I noticed as I approached the chapel was the smallness of the crowd of men about the gate-posts; only a few figures, and they

surly and suspicious fellows, resolved not to salute the landlord, yet breaking away with difficulty from traditional servility. Our popularity had disappeared with the laws that favoured us, but Whelan's appearance counted for something in the decaying sense of rank among the peasantry, and I reproached Edward for not putting his servant into livery. It interested me to see that the superstitions of Carnacun were still followed: the peasants dipped their fingers in a font and sprinkled themselves, and the only difference that I noticed between the two chapels was one for the worse; the windows at Gort were not broken, and the happy, circling swallows did not build under the rafters. It was easier to discover differences in the two congregations. My eyes sought vainly the long dark cloak of married life, nor did I succeed in finding an old man in knee-breeches and worsted stockings, nor a girl drawing her shawl over her head.

" The Irish language is inseparable from these things," I said, " and it has gone. The sermon will be in English, or in a language as near English as those hats and feathers are near the fashions that prevail in Paris."

The Gort peasants seemed able to read, for they held Prayer-books, and as if to help them in their devotion a harmonium began to utter sounds as discordant as the red and blue glass in the windows, and all the time the Mass continued very much as I remembered it, until the priest lifted his alb over his head and placed it upon the altar (" Father James used to preach in the vestment," I said to myself); and very slowly and methodically the Gort priest tried to explain the mystery of Transubstantiation to the peasants, and they listened to him with such indifference that it were difficult not to think that Father James's sermons, based on the fear of the devil, were more suitable to Ireland.

A Mass only rememberable for a squealing harmonium,

some panes in terrifying blues and reds, and my own great shame. However noble my motive may have been, I had knelt and stood with the congregation; I had even bowed my head, making believe by this parade that I accepted the Mass as a truth. It could not be right to do this, even for the sake of the Irish Literary Theatre, and I left the chapel asking myself by what strange alienation of the brain had Edward come to imagine that a piece of enforced hypocrisy on my part could be to anyone's advantage.

It seemed to me that mortal sin had been committed that morning; a sense of guilt clung about me. Edward was consulted. Could it be right for one who did not believe in the Mass to attend Mass? He seemed to acquiesce that it might not be right, but when Sunday came round again my refusal to get on the car so frightened him that I relinquished myself to his scruples, to his terror, to his cries. The reader will judge me weak, but it should be remembered that he is my oldest friend, and it seemed to me that we should never be the same friends again if I refused; added to which he had been telling me all the week that he was getting on finely with his third act, and for the sake of a hypothetical act I climbed up on the car.

"Now, Whelan, don't delay putting up the horse. Mind you're in time for Mass, and don't leave the chapel until the last Gospel has been read."

"Must we wait for Benediction?" I cried ironically.

Edward did not answer, possibly because he does not regard Benediction as part of the liturgy, and is, therefore, more or less indifferent to it. The horse trotted and Whelan clacked his tongue, a horrible noise from which I tried to escape by asking him questions.

"Are the people quiet in this part of the country?"

"Quiet enough," he answered, and I thought I detected a slightly contemptuous accent in the syllables.

"Not much life in the country? I hear the hunting is going to be stopped?"

"Parnell never told them to stop the hunting."

"You're a Parnellite?"

"He was a great man."

"The priests went against him," I said, "because he loved another man's wife."

"And O'Shea not living with her at the time."

"Even if he had been," I answered, "Ireland first of all, say I. He was a great man."

"He was that."

"And the priest of Gort—was he against him?"

"Wasn't he every bit as bad as the others?"

"Then you don't care much to go to his church?"

"I'd just as lief stop away."

"It's strange, Whelan; it's strange that Mr. Martyn should insist on my going to Gort to Mass. Of what use can Mass be to anyone if he doesn't wish to hear it?"

Whelan chuckled, or seemed to chuckle.

"He will express no opinion," I said to myself, "and abstractions don't interest him." So, turning to the concrete, I spoke of the priest who was to say Mass, and Whelan agreed that he had gone "agin" Parnell.

"Well, Whelan, it's a great waste of time going to Gort to hear a Mass one doesn't want to hear, and I have business with Mr. Yeats."

"Maybe you'd like me to turn into Coole, sur?"

"I was thinking we might do that . . . only you won't speak to Mr. Martyn about it, will you? Because, you see, Whelan, everyone has his prejudices, and I am a great friend of Mr. Martyn, and wouldn't like to disappoint him."

"Wouldn't like to contrairy him, sur?"

"That's it, Whelan. Now, what about your dinner? You don't mind having your dinner in a Protestant house?"

"It's all one to me, sur."

"The dinner is the main point, isn't it, Whelan?"

"Begad it is, sur," and he turned the horse in through the gates.

"Just go round," I said, "and put the horse up and say nothing to anybody."

"Yes, sur."

After long ringing the maidservant opened the door and told me that Lady Gregory had gone to church with her niece; Mr. Yeats was composing. Would I take a seat in the drawing-room and wait till he was finished? He must have heard the wheels of the car coming round the gravel sweep, for he was in the room before the servant left it—enthusiastic, though a little weary. He had written five lines and a half, and a pause between one's rhymes is an excellent thing, he said. One could not but admire him, for even in early morning he was convinced of the importance of literature in our national life. He is nearly as tall as a Dublin policeman, and preaching literature he stood on the hearthrug, his feet set close together. Lifting his arms above his head (the very movement that Raphael gives to Paul when preaching at Athens), he said what he wanted to do was to gather up a great mass of speech. It did not seem to me clear why he should be at pains to gather up a great mass of speech to write so exiguous a thing as *The Shadowy Waters;* but we live in our desires rather than in our achievements, and Yeats talked on, telling me that he was experimenting, and did not know whether his play would come out in rhyme or in blank verse: he was experimenting. He could write blank verse almost as easily as prose, and therefore feared it; some obstacle, some dam was necessary. It seemed a pity to interrupt him, but I was interested to hear if he were going to accept my end, and allow the lady to drift southward, drinking yellow ale with the sailors, while the hero sought salva-

tion alone in the North. He flowed out into a torrent of argument and explanation, very ingenious, but impossible to follow. Phrase after phrase rose and turned and went out like a wreath of smoke, and when the last was spoken and the idea it had borne had vanished, I asked him if he knew the legend of Diarmuid and Grania. He began to tell it to me in its many variants, surprising me with unexpected dramatic situations, at first sight contradictory and incoherent, but on closer scrutiny revealing a psychology in germ which it would interest me to unfold. A wonderful hour of literature that was, flowering into a resolution to write an heroic play together. As we sat looking at each other in silence, Lady Gregory returned from church.

She came into the room quickly, with a welcoming smile on her face, and I set her down here as I see her: a middle-aged woman, agreeable to look upon, perhaps for her broad, handsome, intellectual brow enframed in iron-grey hair. The brown, wide-open eyes are often lifted in looks of appeal and inquiry, and a natural wish to sympathize softens her voice till it whines. It modulated, however, very pleasantly as she yielded her attention to Yeats, who insisted on telling her how two beings so different as myself and Whelan had suddenly become united in a conspiracy to deceive Edward, Whelan because he could not believe in the efficacy of a Mass performed by an anti-Parnellite, and I because—Yeats hesitated for a sufficient reason, deciding suddenly that I had objected to hear Mass in Gort because there was no one in the church who had read Villiers de l'Isle Adam except myself; and he seemed so much amused that the thought suddenly crossed my mind that perhaps the *cocasseries* of Connaught were more natural to him than the heroic moods which he believed himself called upon to interpret. His literature is one thing and his conversation is another, divided irreparably. Is this

right? Lady Gregory chattered on, telling stories faintly farcical, amusing to those who knew the neighbourhood, but rather wearisome for one who didn't, and I was waiting for an opportunity to tell her that an heroic drama was going to be written on the subject of Diarmuid and Grania.

When my lips broke the news, a cloud gathered in her eyes, and she admitted that she thought it would be hardly wise for Yeats to undertake any further work at present; and later in the afternoon she took me into her confidence, telling me that Yeats came to Coole every summer because it was necessary to get him away from the distractions of London, not so much from social as from the intellectual distractions that Arthur Symons had inaugurated. The "Savoy" rose up in my mind with its translations from Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Verlaine, and Maeterlinck; and I agreed with her that alien influences were a great danger to the artist. All Yeats' early poems, she broke in, were written in Sligo, and among them were twenty beautiful lyrics and Ireland's one great poem, *The Wanderings of Usheen*—all these had come straight out of the landscape and the people he had known from boyhood.

"For seven years we have been waiting for a new book from him; ever since *The Countess Cathleen* we have been reading the publisher's autumn announcement of *The Wind among the Reeds*. The volume was finished here last year; it would never have been finished if I had not asked him to Coole, and though we live in an ungrateful world, I think somebody will throw a kind word after me some day, if for nothing else, for *The Wind among the Reeds*."

I looked round, thinking that perhaps life at Coole was arranged primarily to give him an opportunity of writing poems. As if she had read my thoughts, Lady Gregory led me into the back drawing-room, and showed

me the table at which he wrote, and I admired the clean pens, the fresh ink and the spotless blotter; these were her special care every morning. I foresaw the strait sofa lying across the window, valued in some future time because the poet had reclined upon it between his rhymes. Ah me! the creeper that rustles an accompaniment to his melodies in the pane will awaken again, year after year, but one year it will awaken in vain. . . . My eyes thanked Lady Gregory for her devotion to literature. Instead of writing novels she had released the poet from the quern of daily journalism, and anxious that she should understand my appreciation of her, I spoke of the thirty-six wild swans that had risen out of the lake while Yeats and I wandered all through the long evening seeking a new composition for *The Shadowy Waters.*

She did not answer me, and I followed her in silence back to the front room and sat listening to her while she told me that it was because she wanted poems from him that she looked askance at our project to write a play together on the subject of Diarmuid and Grania. It was not that the subject was unsuited to his genius, but she thought it should be written by him alone; the best of neither would transpire in collaboration, and she lamented that it were useless to save him from the intellectual temptations of Symons if he were to be tossed into more subtle ones. She laughed, as is her way when she cozens, and reminded me that we were of different temperaments and had arisen out of different literary traditions.

"Mayo went to Montmartre, and Sligo turned into Fleet Street."

Suspicious in her cleverness, my remark did not altogether please her, and she said something about a man of genius and a man of talent coming together, speaking quickly under her breath, so that her scratch would escape notice at the time; and we were talking of our

responsibilities towards genius when the door opened and Yeats came into the room.

He entered somewhat diffidently, I thought, with an invitation to me to go for a walk. Lady Gregory was appeased with the news that he had written five-and-a-half lines that morning, and a promise that he would be back at six, and would do a little more writing before dinner. As he went away he told me that he might attain his maximum of nine lines that evening, if he succeeded in finishing the broken line. But S must never meet S; "for his sake" was inadmissible, and while seeking how he might avoid such a terrifying cacophony we tramped down wet roads and climbed over low walls into scant fields, finding the ruined castle we were in search of at the end of a long boreen among tall, wet grasses. The walls were intact and the stair, and from the top we stood watching the mist drifting across the grey country, Yeats telling how the wine had been drugged at Tara, myself thinking how natural it was that Lady Gregory should look upon me as a danger to Yeats' genius. As we descended the slippery stair an argument began in my head whereby our project of collaboration might be defended. Next time I went to Coole I would say to Lady Gregory: "You see, Yeats came to me with *The Shadowy Waters* because he had entangled the plot and introduced all his ideas into it, and you will admit that the plot had to be disentangled?" To conciliate her completely I would say that while Yeats was rewriting *The Shadowy Waters* I would spend my time writing an act about the many adventures that befell Diarmuid and Grania as they fled before Finn. It was in the ruined castle that Yeats began to tell me the story of their wanderings; and I gave him all the attention that I could spare from Lady Gregory, who, I was thinking, might admit my help in the arrangement of some incidents in *The Shadowy Waters,* but

would always regard our collaboration in *Diarmuid and Grania* with hostility. And for this it seemed to me I could not blame her. She had put her case very well when she had said that her fear was that my influence might break up the mould of his mind.

The car waited for me at the end of the boreen, and I got on it trying to persuade Yeats to come to Tillyra with me, but he said he could not leave Lady Gregory alone, and before we parted I learnt that she read to him every evening. Last summer it was *War and Peace,* and this summer it was Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* He was going to publish a selection and write an Introduction, and must get back to Coole for the seventh canto.

"Good-bye," and springing up on the car, I was driven by Whelan into the mist, thinking Yeats the most fortunate amongst us, he having discovered among all the others that one who, by instinctive sympathy, understood the capacity of his mind, and could evoke it, and who never wearied of it, whether it came to her in elaborately-wrought stanzas or in the form of some simple confession, the mood of last night related as they crossed the sward after breakfast. As the moon is more interested in the earth than in any other thing, there is always some woman more interested in a man's mind than in anything else, and willing to follow it sentence by sentence. A great deal of Yeats' work must come to her in fragments—a line and a half, two lines—and these she faithfully copies on her typewriter, and even those that his ultimate taste has rejected are treasured up, and perhaps will one day appear in a stately variorum edition.

"Well she may say that the future will owe her something," and my thoughts moved back to the first time I saw her some twenty-five years ago. She was then a young woman, very earnest, who divided her hair in the middle and wore it smooth on either side of a broad

and handsome brow. Her eyes were always full of questions, and her Protestant high-school air became her greatly and estranged me from her.

In her drawing-room were to be met men of assured reputation in literature and politics, and there was always the best reading of the time upon her tables. There was nothing, however, in her conversation to suggest literary faculty, and it was a surprise to me to hear one day that she had written a pamphlet in defence of Arabi Pasha, an Egyptian rebel. Some years after she edited her husband's memoirs, and did the work well. So at core she must have been always literary, but early circumstances had not proved favourable to the development of her gift, and it languished till she met Yeats. He could not have been long at Coole before he began to draw her attention to the beauty of the literature that rises among the hills and bubbles irresponsibly, and set her going from cabin to cabin taking down stories, and encouraged her to learn the original language of the country, so that they might add to the Irish idiom which the peasant had already translated into English, making in this way a language for themselves.

Yeats could only acquire the idiom by the help of Lady Gregory, for although he loves the dialect and detests the defaced idiom which we speak in our street parlour, he has little aptitude to learn that of the boreen and the fair. She put her aptitude at his service, and translated portions of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* into Kiltartan (Kiltartan is the village in which she collects the dialect); and she worked it into the revised version of the stories from *The Secret Rose,* published by the Dun Emer Press, and thinking how happy their lives must be at Coole, implicated in literary partnership, my heart went out towards her in a sudden sympathy. "She has been wise all her life through," I said; "she

knew him to be her need at once, and she never hesitated . . . yet she knew me before she knew him."

CHAP. XI.

WHILE Edward revised his play Yeats and I talked of *The Shadowy Waters,* and the Boers crossed one of our frontiers into Cape Colony or Natal—I have forgotten which; but I remember very well my attitude of mind towards the war, and how I used to walk every day from Tillyra to Ardrahan, a distance of at least two Irish miles, to fetch the newspaper, so anxious was I to read of a victory for our soldiers.

Before starting I would pay Edward a visit in his tower, and after a few words about the play, I would tell him that the way out of our South African difficulties was simple—the Government should arm the blacks; and this would make Edward growl out that the English Government was beastly enough to do it; and I remember how I used to go away, pleased that I had always the courage of my morality. Other men do what they know to be wrong, and repent, or think they repent; but as it would be impossible for me to do what I believe to be wrong, repentance is for me an idle word; and thinking that to raise an army of seventy thousand blacks would be a fine trick to play upon the Boers, I often returned through the park full of contempt for my countrymen, my meditations interrupted occasionally by some natural sight—the beauty of the golden bracken through which the path twisted, a crimson beech at the end of it, or the purple beauty of a line of hills over against the rock plain freckled with the thatched cabins of the peasantry. Nor do I remember more beautiful evenings than these were; and as the days drew in, the humble hawthorns shaped themselves into lovely silhouettes, and a meaning seemed

to gather round the low, mossy wall out of which they grew, until one day the pictorial idea which had hitherto stayed my steps melted away, and I became possessed by a sentimental craving for the country itself. After all, it was my country, and strangely perturbed, I returned to the castle to ask Edward's opinion regarding the mysterious feeling that had glided suddenly into my heart as I stood looking at the Burran Mountains.

It is difficult for anybody to say why he loves his country, for what is a country but a geographical entity? And I am not sure that Edward was listening very attentively when I told him of a certain pity, at variance with my character, that had seemed to rise out of my heart.

"It would be strange if Cathleen ni Houlihan were to get me after all. That is impossible . . . only a passing feeling"; and I sat looking at him, remembering that the feeling I dreaded had seemed to come out of the landscape and to have descended into my heart. But he was so little interested in what seemed to me oraculous that I refrained from further explanation, concluding that he was thinking of his play, which had gone to Coole yesterday. I was led to think this, for he was sitting at the window as if watching for Yeats. We were expecting our poet.

"Here he is. I wonder what he thinks of your revisions?"

And to save Edward from humiliation I asked Yeats as soon as he came into the room, if he liked the new third act.

"No, no; it's entirely impossible. We couldn't have such a play performed." And dropping his cloak from his shoulders, he threw his hair from his brow with a pale hand, and sank into a chair, and seemed to lose himself in a sudden meditation. It was like a scene from a play, with Yeats in the principal part; and admiring him, I sat thinking of the gloom of Keen, of the fate of the

Princes in the Tower, headsmen, and suchlike things, and thinking, too, that Yeats, notwithstanding his hierarchic airs, was not an actual literary infallibility. The revised third act might not be as bad as he seemed to think it. He might be mistaken . . . or prejudiced. Yeats' literary integrity is without stain, that I knew. But he might be prejudiced against Edward without knowing it. The success of *The Heather Field* had stirred up in Edward, till then the most unassuming of men, a certain aggressiveness which, for some time past, I could see had been getting on Yeats' nerves. Nor am I quite sure that myself at that moment would not have liked to humble Edward a little . . . only a little. But let us not be drawn from the main current of our resolution, which is entirely literary, by a desire to note every sub-current. Yeats looked very determined, and when I tried to induce him to give way he answered:

"We are artists, and cannot be expected to accept a play because other plays as bad, and nearly as bad, have been performed."

"Saints," I said, "do not accept sins because sins are of common occurrence."

He did not answer, but sat looking into the fire gloomily.

"He takes a very determined view of your play, Edward. It may not strike me in the same light. If you will give me the manuscript I'll just run upstairs with it. I can't read it in front of you both."

There was no reason why I should read the first two acts; Edward had not touched them. What he had engaged to rewrite was the last half of the third act, and a few minutes would enable me to see if he had made sufficient alterations for the play to be put forward—not as a work of art—*i.e.*, as something that would be acted in fifty years for the delight of numerous audiences, as proof of the talent that existed in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century—but as a play to which literary

people could give their attention without feeling ashamed of themselves afterwards. There was no reason why we should ask for more; for the subject of the play was merely one of topical interest, and it is a mistake—I pointed this out to Yeats—to be very particular about the literary quality of such a play. All the same it would have to be "put right," and this Edward could not do. It was more a matter for a cunning literary hand than for a fellow like Edward with an original streak of genius in him, and very little literary tact.

On these reflections I sat down to read, and a very few minutes sufficed to show me that the play was no better than before. It was crude enough to make one wonder, and Yeats must have wondered while he read it. Still, he should not have spoken so arrogantly; he should have remembered that Edward was a human being; and he had alluded to the play contemptuously, as being no better than the literary effort of the local schoolmaster, etc.; and his manner was equivalent to saying, "Your soul is inferior, and beneath my notice. Take it away."

Yeats' treatment of Edward, because Edward had written a somewhat crude play, enabled me to carry my appreciation of the poet one step farther than I had done that afternoon as we collaborated round the edge of the lake. The new fact was like a lamp put into my hand, and I began to understand how abstract thinking kills the human sympathies.

"The metaphysician," I said, "has absorbed the human being. Yeats is no longer capable of understanding anything but the literary valuelessness of Edward's play. The man behind the play is ignored . . . Yeats can no longer think with his body; it is only his mind that thinks. He is all intellect, if that isn't too cardinal a word." And seeing before me quite a new country of conjecture, one which I had never rambled in, I sat thinking of the cruelty of the monks of the Middle Ages, and the cruelty

of the nuns and the monks of the present day. Their thoughts are abstracted from this world, from human life—that is why; and Yeats was a sort of monk of literature, an Inquisitor of Journalism who would burn a man for writing that " education was progressing by leaps and bounds." Opinions make people cruel—literary as well as theological. Whereas the surgeon, whose thought is always of the flesh, is the kindliest of creatures. It is true that one sometimes hears of surgeons who, in the pursuit of science, willingly undertake operations which they know to be dangerous, and we know that the scientists in the laboratory are indifferent to the sufferings of the animals they vivisect. Even so, Nature thinks like the surgeon who risks an operation in order that he may discover the cause of the disease. The knowledge he gathers from the death of the patient is passed on, and it saves the life of another. But the artist cannot pass on any portion of his art to his pupil; his gift lives in himself and dies with him, and his art comes as much from his heart as from his intellect. The intellect outlives the heart, and the heart of Yeats seemed to me to have died ten years ago; the last of it probably went into the composition of *The Countess Cathleen.*

Yesterevening, when we wandered about the lake, talking of *The Shadowy Waters,* trying to free it from the occult sciences that had grown about it, Fomorians beaked and unbeaked, and magic harps and Druid spells, I did not perceive that the difficulties into which the story had wandered could be attributed to a lack of human sympathy. But Yeats' treatment of Edward proved it to me. The life of the artist is always at difficult equipoise; he may fail from lack of human sympathies, or he may yield altogether to them and become a mere philanthropist; and we may well wonder what the choice of the artist would have been if he had to choose between the destruction of Messina and Reggio or Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Were he to choose the ancient ruins in preference to the modern towns, he might give very good reasons for doing so, saying that to prolong the lives of a hundred thousand people for a few years would not be, in his opinion, worth a bronze like the Narcissus. A very specious argument might be maintained in favour of the preservation of the bronze, even at the price of a hundred thousand lives. Perhaps he might let the bronze go, but if all Greek art were added he would hesitate, and when he had let one hundred thousand men and women go to their doom he would probably retire into the mountains to escape from sight of every graven thing. To write a play our human and artistic sympathies must be very evenly balanced, and I remembered that among my suggestions for the reconstruction of *The Shadowy Waters,* the one that Yeats refused most resolutely was that the woman should refuse to accompany the metaphysical pirate to the ultimate North, but return somewhat diffidently, ashamed of herself, to the sailors who were drinking yellow ale.

"Yeats has reflected himself in the pirate," I said. "All he cares for is a piece of literature. The man behind it matters nothing to him. But am I not just as bad as he? Am I not worse than he? Edward is my oldest friend."

The manuscript fell from my hand, and I sat for a long time thinking; and then, getting up, I wandered out of my room and hung over the banisters, looking down into the central hall. "What can Yeats be saying to Edward? The interview must be a strained one, so contemptuously did he speak just now. The sooner I go down and bring it to an end the better."

And I resolved to say that I could see no reason why the play should not be acted. But half-way down the stairs my conscience forbade so flagrant a lie. Yeats would not believe me. And what good would it do to allow Edward to bring over actors and actresses for the

performance of such a play? "It's kinder to tell him the truth." In the middle of the hall I stopped again. "But if I tell him the truth the Irish Literary Theatre will come to an end."

"Well, Edward, I've read your play, . . . but the alterations you've made aren't very considerable, and I can't help thinking that the play requires something more done to it."

"You've read my play very quickly. Are you sure you've read it?"

"I've read all the passages that you've altered."

I had only glanced through them, but I could not tell him that a glance was sufficient.

"If there were time, you might alter it yourself. You see, the time is short—only two months"; and I watched Edward. For a long time he said nothing, but sat like a man striving with himself, and I pitied him, knowing how much of his life was in his play.

"I give you the play," he said, starting to his feet. "Do with it as you like; turn it inside out, upside down. I'll make you a present of it!"

"But, Edward, if you don't wish me to alter your play——"

"Ireland has always been divided, and I've preached unity. Now I'm going to practise it. I give you the play."

"But what do you mean by giving us the play?" Yeats said.

"Do with it what you like. I'm not going to break up the Irish Literary Theatre. Do with my play what you like"; and he rushed away.

"I'm afraid, Yeats, his feelings are very much hurt."

And my heart went out to the poor man sitting alone in his tower, brooding his failure. I expected Yeats to say something sympathetic, but all he said was: "We couldn't produce such a play as that." It was perhaps

the wisest thing he could say under the circumstances. For what use is there in sentimentalizing over the lamb whose throat is going to be cut in the slaughterhouse?

"The sooner the alterations are made the better."

And I asked Yeats to come over to-morrow.

"You see, you'll have to help me with this adaptation, for I know nothing of Ireland."

It is a pleasure to be with him, especially when one meets him for the purpose of literary discussion; he is a real man of letters, with an intelligence as keen as a knife, and a knife was required to cut the knots into which Edward had tied his play, for very few could be loosened. The only fault I found with Yeats in this collaboration was the weariness into which he sank suddenly, saying that after a couple of hours he felt a little faint, and would require half an hour's rest.

We returned to the play after lunch, and continued until nearly seven o'clock, too long a day for Yeats, who was not so strong then as he is now, and Lady Gregory wrote to me, saying that I must be careful not to overwork him, and that it would be well not to let him go more than two hours without food—a glass of milk, or, better still, a cup of beef-tea in the forenoon, and half an hour after lunch he was to have a glass of sherry and a biscuit. These refreshments were brought up by Gantley, Edward's octogenarian butler, and every time I heard his foot upon the stairs I offered up a little prayer that Edward was away in his tower, for, of course, I realized that the tray would bring home to him in a very real and cruel way the fact that his play was being changed and rewritten under his very roof, and that he was providing sherry and biscuits in order to enable Yeats to strike out, or, worse still, to rewrite his favourite passages. It was very pathetic; and while pitying and admiring Edward for his altruism, I could not help thinking of two children threading a blue-bottle. True that the blue-bottle's plight

is worse than Edward's, for the insect does not know why it is being experimented upon. Edward, at all events, had the consolation that he was sacrificing himself for his country. It is well known that the idea of sacrifice produces a great exaltation of mind, and is, in fact, a sort of anæsthetic. Let it be admitted that we were cruel, but give us credit for our intentions.

When Yeats tarried as late as seven o'clock in order to finish a scene, Edward would ask him to stay to dinner, and we were so eager about our work that we lacked tact, discussing before Edward the alterations we were going to make, and one morning reading what we had written to him. He did not like our adaptation of the first act, and when we told him the alterations we were going to make in the second, he said:

"But you surely aren't going to alter that? Why do you do this? Good Heavens! I wouldn't advise you——"

Yeats looked at him sternly, as a schoolmaster looks at a small boy, and next morning Edward told me that he was going to Dublin, adding that I had better come with him. On my mentioning that I expected Yeats that afternoon, he said that he would write, telling him of his decision, and a note came from Lady Gregory in the course of the afternoon, saying that she was leaving Coole. Would it be convenient to Edward to allow Yeats to stay at Tillyra for a few days by himself? He would like to continue the composition of *The Shadowy Waters* in Galway.

Lady Gregory's request seemed to me an extraordinary one to make in the present circumstances, and it seemed still more extraordinary that Edward should have granted it, and without a moment's hesitation, as if he had already forgiven Yeats his literary arrogance. Noticed it he certainly had. A nice point in psychology this was for me, and I turned it over many times before I discovered that it was not Edward's natural amiability, nor because he

is predisposed to forget and to forgive, but because he believed Yeats to be Ireland's poet, and would not like to do anything that might prevent him writing a masterpiece which would redound to Ireland's credit in the future.

"Extraordinary!" I said to myself. "These people are willing to sacrifice everything for Ireland—a strange country, demanding sacrifices always. If it were human lives to defend it against the foreigner, I should understand. Ever since I have been in the country I have heard people speaking of working for Ireland. But how can one work for Ireland without working for oneself? What do they mean? They do not know themselves, but go on vainly sacrificing all personal achievement, humiliating themselves before Ireland as if the country were a god. A race inveterately religious I suppose it must be! And these sacrifices continue generation after generation. Something in the land itself inspires them." And I began to tremble lest the terrible Cathleen ni Houlihan might overtake me. She had come out of that arid plain, out of the mist, to tempt me, to soothe me into forgetfulness that it is the plain duty of every Irishman to disassociate himself from all memories of Ireland—Ireland being a fatal disease, fatal to Englishmen and doubly fatal to Irishmen. Ireland is in my family. My grand-uncle lay in prison condemned to death for treason; my father wasted his life in the desert of national politics. It is said that the custom of every fell disease is to skip a generation, and up to the present it had seemed that I conformed to the rule. But did I? If I did not, some great calamity awaited me, and I remembered that the middle-aged may not change their point of view. To do so is decadence.

CHAP. XII.

A ROOM had been hired at the Shelbourne Hotel, and the mornings were spent writing *The Bending of the Bough*. It could be finished in the next three weeks if I fortuned upon somebody who could explain the various sections and parties in Irish politics, all striving for mastery at that time; somebody acquainted with the country enough to unravel the Lord Castletown incident, and expound the Healy problem, the O'Brien problem, the Redmond problem, and the great many other political problems with which the play is beset.

There is little use in writing when there is no clear vision in the mind; the pen stops of its own accord, and I often rose from my chair and walked about the room, my feet at last finding their way through the hotel, and down the street as far as the Kildare Street Club, to ask Edward if he would tell me. He would tell me nothing. His present to the Irish Literary Theatre was his play, and I was free to alter it as I pleased, putting the last act first and the first act last, but he would not help me to alter it; and it was impossible not to feel that it was reasonable for him to refuse.

"What do you think of the title—*The Bending of the Bough?*"

"*The Tale of a Town* is a better title." And after some heated words we left the Club one evening together. "You must sign the play," he said, turning suddenly.

"I sign the play!" I answered, all my literary vanity ablaze. "No; but I'll put 'adapted from.'"

"I'll have no adaptations; I'll have nothing to do with your version"; and he wrenched himself free from me, leaving me to go my way, thinking that there was nothing for it but to sign a work that was not mine. "I, too, am sacrificing to Cathleen ni Houlihan; one sacrifice brings many." And to escape from the hag, whom I could

see wrapped in a faded shawl, her legs in grey worsted stockings, her feet in brogues, I packed my trunk and went away by the mail-boat laughing at myself, and at the same time not quite sure that she was not still at my heels. Cathleen follows her sons across the seas; and she did not seem to be very far away in the morning in Victoria Street, while Edward's play was before me. After writing some lines of vituperation quite in the Irish style, I would lay down the pen and cry: "Cathleen, art thou satisfied with me?" And it seemed an exquisite joke to voice Ireland's woes, until one day I stopped in Ebury Street, abashed; for it was not a victory for our soldiers that I desired to read in the paper just bought from the boy who had rushed past me, yelling "News from the Front," but one for the Boers. The war was forgotten, and I walked on slowly, frightened lest this sudden and inexplicable movement of soul should be something more than a merely accidental mental vacillation.

"It may be no more, and it may be that I am changing," I whispered under my breath; and then, charging myself with faint-heartedness and superstition, I walked on, trying to believe that I should be myself again next morning.

It was a bad sign to lie awake all night, thinking of what happened in Ebury Street the evening before, and asking if I really did desire that the Boers should win the fight and keep their country; and it was a worse sign to read without interest headlines announcing a forward movement of our troops. On turning over the pages, a rumour (it was given as a rumour) that the Boers were retreating northward caught my eye; the paper was thrown aside, and an hour was spent wondering why the paper had been tossed aside so negligently. Was it because I had become, without knowing it, Pro-Boer? That was it, for next morning, on reading that five hundred of our troops had been taken prisoners, I was swept away by a great joy, and it was a long time before I could

recover sufficient calm of mind to ask myself the reason of all this sympathy for illiterate farmers speaking a Dutch dialect in which no book had yet been written; a people without any sentiment of art, without a past, without folk-lore, and therefore, in some respects, a less reputable people than the Irish. I had seen some finely-designed swords in the Dublin Museum, forged, without doubt, in the late Bronze Age, and Coffey had shown me the splendid bits that the ancient Irish put into their horses' jaws. There was the monkish Book of Kells, a beautiful thing in a way; the Cross of Cong was made in Roscommon, and by an Irish artist; it bears the name of its maker, an Irish name, so there can be no doubt as to its nationality. There are some fine legends, the rudiments of a literature that had not been carried into culture, the Irish not being a thinking race . . . perhaps.

After that I must have fallen into a deep lethargy. On awakening, I remembered the autumn evening in Edward's park, when Cathleen ni Houlihan rose out of the plain that lies at the foot of the Burran Mountains, and came, foot-sore and weary, up through the beech-grove to me. I had not the heart to repulse her, so hapless did she seem; nor did I remember the danger of listening to her till I had stood before Edward telling him the story of the meeting in the park.

"It is dangerous," I had said to him, "to listen to Cathleen even for a moment; she has brought no good luck or good health to anyone."

The morning paper was picked up from the hearthrug, and the news of the capture of our troops read again and again, the same thrill of joy coming into my heart. The Englishman that was in me (he that wrote *Esther Waters*) had been overtaken and captured by the Irishman. Strange, for all my life had been lived in England. When I went to Ireland I always experienced a sense of being a stranger in my own country, and, like many another

Irishman, had come to think that I was immune from the disease that overtakes all Irishmen sooner or later—that moment in Edward's park was enough for me, and ever since the disease had been multiplying in secret: the incident in Ebury Street was only a symptom. . . . A moment after I was asking myself if the microbe were sown that evening in Edward's park, or if the introduction of it could be traced back to the afternoon in Victoria Street, when Edward and Yeats had called to ask me to join in their attempt to give a National Literary Theatre to Ireland. It might be traced further back still, to the evening in the Temple when Edward had told me that he would like to write his plays in Irish; and there arose up in me the memory of that midnight when I wandered among the courts and halls, dreaming of Ireland, of the story of wild country life that I might write.

"It was then that I caught the disease," I said; "a sort of spiritual consumption; it was then that the microbe first got into my soul and ate away most of it without my being aware of its presence, or of the ravages caused by it until the greater part of me collapsed in Ebury Street."

And what was still more serious was that out of the wreck and rubble of my former self a new self had arisen. It could not be that the old self that had worshipped pride, strength, courage, and egoism should now crave for justice and righteousness, and should pause to consider humility and obedience as virtues, and might be moved to advocate chastity to-morrow. Such a thing could not be. A new self had grown up within me, or had taken possession of me. It is hard to analyze a spiritual transformation; one knows little about oneself; life is mysterious. Only this can I say for certain, that I learnt then that ideas are as necessary to us as our skins; and, like one that has been flayed, I sat wondering whether new ideas would clothe me again, until a piece of burning

coal falling from the grate into the fender awoke me from my reverie. When I had put it back among the live embers, I said: "My past life crumbles away like that piece of coal; in a few moments it will be all gone from me, and my new self will then be alone in me, and powerful enough to lead me into a new life. Into what life will it lead me? Into what Christianity?"

I wandered across the room to consult the looking-glass, curious to know if the great spiritual changes that were happening in me were recognizable upon my face; but the mirror does not give back characteristic expression, and to find out whether the expression of my face had changed I should have to consult my portrait-painters: Steer, Tonks, and Sickert would be able to tell me. And that night at Steer's, after a passionate protest against the wickedness and the stupidity of the Boer War delivered across his dining-table, I got up and walked round the room, feeling myself to be unlike the portraits they had painted of me, every one of which had been done before the war. The external appearance no doubt remained, but the acquisition of a moral conscience must have modified it. As I was about to launch my question on the company, I caught sight of the little black eyes that Steer screws up when he looks at anything; all the other features are insignificant; the eyes are all that one notices, and the full, sleek outlines of the face. His shoulders slope a little, like mine, and the body is long, and the large feet shuffle along the street in goloshes if the weather be wet, and in the studio in carpet slippers. Long white hands droop from his cuffs—hands that I remember carrying canvases from one easel to another. Tonks is lank and long in every limb, and one remembers him as a herring-gutted fellow, with a high bridge on his nose; and one remembers him much more for the true, honest heart that always goes with his appearance. I could see that he sympathized with the Boer women and children

dying in concentration camps, and that Steer was thinking of the pictures he had brought home from the country. It was shameful that anyone should be able to think of pictures at such a time, but Steer takes no interest in morals; his world is an external world; and I abandoned myself somewhat cowardly to his pictures till the end of the evening, thinking all the while that Tonks would understand my perplexities better, and that the time to speak to him would be when we walked home together.

"Steer's pictures are the best he has done," Tonks said, as soon as we had left our friend's doorstep, and he asked me if I liked the wooded hillside better than the ruins.

"I can't talk of pictures just now, Tonks. The war has put pictures clean out of my head, and I don't mind telling you that Steer's indifference to everything except his values has disgusted me. I don't know if you noticed it, I hardly looked at anything. Were you interested?"

"Well, Moore, I can always admire Steer's pictures, but it is difficult to detach oneself from the war to admire them sufficiently. I'm sure we shall admire his work more at some other time; so far I am with you."

"Only as far as that? Can't you see that the war has changed me utterly?"

"I can see that you take it very much to heart."

"I don't mean that, Tonks; it seems to me to have changed me outwardly. I can't believe that I present the same appearance. After all, it is the mind that makes the man. Tell me, hasn't the war put a new look on my face?"

"When you mention it, you change; there's no doubt about it, you seem a different person. I'll say that."

"Do tell me." And Tonks tried to describe the scowl that overspreads my face.

"I'll do a drawing of it, and then you'll see. You glare at us across the dinner-table. Steer and I were

talking about it only yesterday, and Steer said: "Moore looks like that when he remembers we are Englishmen. Now, isn't it so?"

"I shouldn't like to say it wasn't, though it seems silly to admit it. You don't approve of the war, do you, Tonks?"

"I think it is a very unfortunate affair."

"Those concentration camps!"

At the words the kind melancholy of the surgeon appeared in Tonks' face. He was a surgeon before he was a painter, and, seeing that he was genuinely afflicted, I told him the Ebury Street episode, and my fears lest my life had been changed, and radically, and that there was no place now in it for admiration of pictures or of literature.

"But what will you do, my dear Moore?" Tonks asked, his voice tight with sympathy.

"I don't know; anything may happen to me, for I don't think as I used to. When it is assumed that justice must give way to expediency, concentration camps are established and women and children kept prisoners so that they may die of typhoid and enteric."

"No, Moore, it isn't as bad as that. They couldn't be left on the veldt; we had to do something with the women and children."

"Tonks, I'm ashamed of you! After having burnt down their houses you had to keep them, and as it would be an advantage to you to destroy the Boer race, you keep them in concentration camps where they drop off like flies."

"Now, my dear Moore, I'm not going to quarrel with you. I'm quite ready to admit——"

"When I think of it I feel as if I were going mad, and that I must do something. This evening when I jumped up from my chair and walked about the room I could hardly keep myself from breaking Steer's Chelsea

china; those shepherds and shepherdesses were too cynical. Men and women in roses and ribbons twanging guitars! Why——"

"Of course, I can see what you mean, but I can't help laughing when you say you were tempted to break Steer's Chelsea figures."

"It is easy, Tonks, to see an absurdity; very little intelligence is required for that; much more is required to see the abomination of——"

At that moment we were joined by Sickert. He had stopped behind to exchange a few words with Steer.

"You really shouldn't, Sickert," Tonks said. "The last time you detained him on the doorstep he was laid up with influenza."

"An attack of influenza! And thousands of women and children kept prisoners in concentration camps—children without milk to drink; water, perhaps, from springs fouled with the staling of mules!"

"But if we had Steer laid up, what would happen to the models?" Sickert asked. "One is coming at ten to-morrow. Who would support the models? Would you? And the New English Art Club without a work by Steer! Six feet by four; a fine Old English prospect with a romantic castle in the foreground. An august site. As soon as the war is over, one of those sites will be bought for the Pretoria Art Gallery, and the taxpayer will be charged an extra halfpenny in the pound for improving the intellectual status of the Kaffirs, which will be indefinitely raised."

There was a moment's hesitation between anger and laughter, but no one is angry when Sickert is by. He has kept in middle age a great deal of his youth, and during dinner I had noticed that not a streak of grey showed in the thick rippling shock of yellow-brown hair. The golden moustache has been shaved away, and the long mouth and closely-set lips give him a distinct clerical

look. "There was always something of the cleric and the actor in him," I thought, as I overlooked his new appearance, drawing conclusions from the special bowler-hat of French shape that he wore. He had just come over from Dieppe, and his trousers were French corduroy, amazingly peg-top, and the wide braid on the coat recalled 1860. He was, at this time, addicted to 1860, living in a hotel in the Tottenham Court Road in which all the steads were four-posted and all the beds feather, and he was full of contempt for Steer's collection of Chelsea china, and in favour of wax fruit and rep curtains, and advocated heavy mahogany sideboards.

He was as Pro-Boer as myself, with less indignation and more wit, and Tonks and I yielded that night, as we always do, to the charm of his whimsical imagination, and we laughed when he said:

"Our latest casualties are the capture of four hundred Piccadilly dandies who had been foolish enough to go out to fight the veterans of the veldt. They were stripped of their clothes, patted on their backs and sent home to camp in silk fleshings and embroidered braces. . . . Hope Bros., Regent Street."

Sickert's wide, shaven lip laughed, and he looked so like himself in his overcoat and his French bowler-hat that we walked for some yards delighting in his personality—Tonks a little hurt, but pleased all the same, myself treasuring up each contemptuous word for further use, and considering at which of my friends' houses the repetition of Sickert's wit would give most offence.

Tonks bade us good-night in the King's Road. Sickert came on with me; his way took him through Victoria Street, and we stopped outside my doorway, drawn into tense communion by our detestation of the war.

"I'm so glad to have met you after this long while," he said, "for I wanted to know if you held the same opinion of Mr. Gladstone. Do you remember how we

used to laugh at him? Now we see what a great man he was."

"England is, at present, the ugliest country. Oh, I have changed towards England. I try to forget that I once thought differently, for when I remember myself (my former self) I hate myself as much as I hate England."

"Doesn't the lack of humour in the newspapers surprise you? This morning I read in the *Pall Mall* that we are an Imperial people, and being an Imperial people we must think Imperially, and presumably do everything else Imperially. Splendid, isn't it? Everything, the apple-trees included, must be Imperial. We won't eat apples except Imperial apples, and the trees are conjured to bear no others, but the apple-trees go on flowering and bearing the same fruit as before," and Sickert burst into joyous laughter in which I joined.

We bade each other good-night, and I went up to my bed looking forward to the morning paper. "Which may bring us some further news of the Piccadilly dandies," I muttered into my pillow.

In old times my servant would find me in my drawing-room looking at a picture that I had bought a few days before at Christie's, or at one that had been some time in my possession, uncertain whether I liked it as much as last year; but, as I told Tonks, art and literature had ceased to interest me, and now she found me every morning in the dining-room reading the paper. The morning after Steer's dinner-party she came upon me in a very exultant mood. "Another win for the Boers," I told her, and took the paper back to bed with me, thinking how I should go down and humiliate my tobacconist. The day before he had said: "Buller has trapped the Boers; we shall see a change within the next few days." He was right. "A very nice change, too," and I went out to ask him if he had any new cigars that would suit me.

I did not like his cigars, and told him so after a ten minutes' discussion as to the reason for our defeat at Spion Kop. From the tobacconist's I went to the Stores in the hope of waylaying a friend or two there. A lady that I knew very well always shopped there in the morning, and it would be only a kindness to advise her to take her money out of South African mines.

Parents take pleasure in putting a horrible powder called Gregory into a spoon, and covering it with jam, and telling the unfortunate child that he must swallow it; and that afternoon I called on all my friends, taking a grim pleasure in watching their faces while I assured them that the recall of our troops would be the wisest thing we could do.

Love of cruelty is inveterate in the human being, and remembering this, remorse would sometimes overtake me in the street, and a passionate resolution surge up not to offend again, and it often happened to me to go to another house to approve myself; but some chance phrase would set me talking again; my tongue could not be checked, not even when the lady, to distract my attention from De Wet, asked my opinion of some picture or knick-knack. She did not succeed any better when she strove to engage my attention by an allusion to a book. Not only books and pictures had lost interest for me, but human characteristics; opinions were what I demanded, and from everybody. I remember coming from the North of England in company with a prosaic middle-aged man who had brought into the carriage with him for his relaxation three newspapers—the *Builder*, the *Athenæum*, and *Vanity Fair*—and in the long journey from Darlington to London I watched him taking up these papers, one after the other, and reading them with the same interest. At any other time I should have been eager to make the acquaintance of one that could find something to interest him in these papers, and should have been

much disappointed if I did not succeed in becoming intimate with him by the end of the journey. But, strange as it will seem to the reader, who by this time has begun to know me, I am forced to admit that I was only anxious to hear his opinion of the war, and my curiosity becoming, at last, intolerable, I interrupted his architectural, social or literary meditation with the statement that the *Daily Telegraph* contained some very grave news. Two eyes looked at me over spectacles, and on the phrase, "Well, the war was bound to come sooner or later," we began to argue, and it was not until we reached Finsbury Park—he got out there—that I remembered I had forgotten to ask him if he were a constant reader of the three newspapers that he rolled up and put away carefully into a black bag.

The incident is one among hundreds of similar incidents, all pointing to the same fact that nothing but the war interested me as a subject of conversation or of thought. Every day the obsession became more terrible, and the surrender of my sanity more imminent. I shall try to tell the story as it happened, but fear that some of it will escape my pen; yet it is all before me clear as my reflection in the glass: that evening, for instance, when I walked with a friend through Berkeley Square and fell out with my friend's appearance, so English did it seem to me to be, for he wore his clothes arrogantly; yet it was not his clothes so much as his sheeplike face that angered me. We were dining at the same house that night, and on looking round the dinner-table I saw the same sheep in everybody, in the women as much as in the men. Next day in Piccadilly I caught sight of it in every passer-by; every man and woman seemed to wear it, and everybody's bearing and appearance suggested to me a repugnant, sensual cosmopolitanism; a heartless lust for gold was read by me in their faces—"for the goldfields

of Pretoria which they haven't gotten yet, and never will get, I hope."

In the dusk England seemed to rise up before me in person, a shameful and vulgar materialism from which I turned with horror, and this passionate revolt against England was aggravated by memories of my former love of England, and, do what I would, I could not forget that I had always met in England a warm heart, a beautiful imagination, firmness and quiet purpose. But I just had to forget that I ever thought well of England, or to discover that I had been mistaken in England. To bring the point as clearly as I may before the reader, I will ask him to think of a man who has lived happily and successfully with a woman for many years, and suddenly discovers her to be a criminal or guilty of some infidelity towards him; to be, at all events, one whose conduct and capacities are not those that he had credited her with. As his suspicions multiply, the beauties which he once read in her face and figure fade, and her deportment becomes aggressive, till she can no longer cross the room without exciting angry comment in his mind. A little later he finds that he cannot abide in the house, so offensive is it to him; the disposition of the furniture reminds him of her; and one day the country through which they used to walk together turns so distasteful that he longs to take the train and quit it for ever. How the change has been accomplished he does not know, and wonders. The hills and the woods compose the landscape as they did before, but the poetry has gone out of them; no gleam of sunlight plays along the hillsides for him, and no longer does the blue hill rise up far away like a land out of which dreams come and whither they go. The world exists only in our ideas of it, and as my idea of England changed England died, so far as I was concerned; an empty materialism was all I could see around me; and with this idea in my mind my eyes soon saw

London as a great sprawl of brick on either side of a muddy river without a statue that one could look upon with admiration.

And then I grew interested in my case, and went for long walks with a view to discovering how much I had been deceived, taking a certain bitter pleasure in noticing that Westminster Abbey was not comparable to Notre Dame (nobody ever thought it was, but that was a matter that did not concern me); Westminster was merely an echo of French genius, the church that a Norman King had built in a provincial city; and, going up Parliament Street, I shook my head over my past life, for there had been a time when the Horse Guards had seemed no mean structure. The National Gallery was compared to the Madeleine and to the Bourse; St. Martin's Church roused me to special anger, and I went down the Strand wondering how anyone who had seen the beautiful French churches could admire it. I walked past St. Clement Danes, thinking it at best a poor thing. The Temple Church was built by Normans, and it pleased me to remember that there were no avenues in London, no great boulevards. There are parks in London, but they have not been laid out. Hyde Park is no more than a great enclosure, and St. James's Park, which used to awaken such delicate sympathies in my heart as I stood on the bridge, seemed to me in 1900 a rather foolish counterfeit, "shamming some French model," I said. "The detestable race has produced nothing original: not one sculptor, nor a great painter, except, perhaps, John Millais. He came from one of the Channel Islands. A Frenchman!" If English painting can be repudiated, English literature cannot: Shakespeare, Shelley, and Wordsworth—above all, Shelley, whose poetry I loved more than anything else in the world. Was he free from the taint of England?

The question occupied my thoughts one evening all the

way home, and after dinner I took down a volume and read, or looked through, the last act of *Prometheus*. I cast my eyes over "The Sensitive Plant"; it might have been beautiful once, but all the beauty seemed to have faded out of it, and I could discover none in the "Ode to the West Wind." Nor did any of the hymns interest me, not even the "Hymn of Pan," the most beautiful lyric in the world. My indifference to English poetry invaded the language itself; English seemed to me to lack consistency that evening—a woolly language without a verbal system or agreement between the adjectives and nouns. So did I rave until, wearied of finding fault with everything English, my thoughts melted away into memories of the French poets.

CHAP. XIII.

IT would be better to get away from London and waste no more time joining people in their walks, to try to persuade them that London was an ugly city, or to wring some admission from them that the Boer War was shameful, and that England was on her knees, out-fought, vanquished by a few thousand Boers, about as many able-bodied men as one would find in the Province of Connaught.

It was in such empty conflict of opinion that I had spent yesterevening all the way along the King's Road, having button-holed a little journalist as he came out of Sloane Square railway-station. He seemed to be laughing at me when we parted, somewhere in the Grosvenor Road, and I had returned home full of the conviction that I must get away from opinions. My condition would welcome a pastoral country, and a vision of a shepherd following his flock rose before my eyes. The essential was a country unpolluted by opinions, and hoping to find this in Sussex, I got into the train at Victoria one after-

noon, rapt in a memory of some South Saxon folk that lived in an Italian house under the downs.

They had come into my life when I was a boy, and had been always the single part of me that had never changed; ideas had come and gone, but they had remained, and it was pleasant to ponder on this friendship as I returned to them and to seek out the secret reason of my love of these people—the very last that anybody would expect to find me among. So it was clear that there was nothing superficial in our affection; it was at the roots of our nature, and I could only think that I had not wearied of these South Saxons because they were so like themselves, exemplars of a long history, a great tradition; and as the train passed through Haywards Heath I could see them coming over with Hengist and Horsa. Ever since they had been on their land, cultivating it, till it had taken on their likeness, or else they had taken on the likeness of the land. Which had happened I did not know, nor did it matter much. Hundreds of —— had come and gone, but the type remained, affirming itself in habits and customs.

"It is my love of what is permanent that has drawn me to them again and again," I said, and I thought of that sweet returning, when, coming back from France after a pursuit of painting through the Latin Quarter and Montmartre, I had met Colville in Regent Street; and without reproaching me for my long desertion, he had asked me when it would be convenient for me to come down to Sussex to see them. All my love of them had sprung up on the instant, and we had gone away together that very afternoon. My visit, intended to last for two or three days, had lasted two or three years . . . perhaps more.

One reads one's past life like a book out of which some pages have been torn and many mutilated, and among many scattered and broken sentences I come upon a para-

graph telling of a summer spent in Southwick, writing the *Confessions of a Young Man,* in a lodging overlooking the green. We all remember that wonderful Jubilee summer, when the corn was harvested at the end of July; and nearly every evening of summer-time I had followed the winding road under the downs until I came to a corner where the sunk fence could be climbed. As I walked across the park I could see the lights in the dining-room. Kind, homely, hospitable folk, always glad to see me, among whom the pleasantest years of my life were passed; so it is a pity that so much text should be missing or indecipherable. A continuous narrative is not discoverable until the evening when Colville brought back two Belgian hares, and asked his mother to look after them. I recall our first solicitudes, our eagerness to poke lettuces into their hutch; and when some young rabbits appeared there was no end to our enthusiasm.

Colville's project of a rabbit-farm was largely his mother's, I think; be this as it may, by identifying herself with it she had persuaded herself at the end of two years that she alone could feed rabbits. It was plain to us she was working beyond her strength; there could be no doubt about that, and very often I would plead my right to reprove her and take a heavy barrowful of turnips out of her hands, and insist on wheeling it across the garden into the rabbit-yard. Everybody knows how quickly rabbits breed; before three years were out there were four hundred rabbits in the yard; one could hardly walk into it for fear of treading on the little ones; the outhouses were absorbed one by one, and in the fourth year there were rabbit-hutches in the stables, in the coal- and in the wood-sheds, and we used to say that in another six months they would be in the kitchen and coming up the stairs into the drawing-room, if the masons that were building Colville's house on the downs and the maker of the iron hurdles at Wolverhampton did not hasten. And every

time Colville returned from London he was asked if he had been able to extract a definite promise from his ironmonger. At last the poor man, plagued and frightened, went himself to Wolverhampton, and came back joyful, saying that the manager at the works had given him special assurances that we might look forward to the exportation of the rabbits to the downs at the end of the month. The end of the month seemed a long while, but we understood that if the rabbits were turned out on the downs before the ground was enclosed, the stoats and the foxes would get a great number, and poachers the rest. A poaching raid would certainly be organized at Beading, and the labour of years would be wasted.

The last delay was happily not a long one; a few weeks afterwards the house was declared ready to receive us, and the rabbits went away in several vans, Colville and I following on foot, talking, as we went by Thunders Barrow Barn, of the great fortune that always lay about waiting to be picked up by the adventurous.

Again a great gap comes in my narrative. Memory chooses to retain certain scenes and to allow others to perish, and her choice often seems arbitrary and unreasonable. Why should I, for instance, remember Knight, the keeper at Freshcombe Lodge? A spare, silent man is before me as I write, and in my memory he still goes about his work just as he used to do twenty years ago. He strides along, a typical gamekeeper, stopping by the thorn-tree to see if there is anything in his traps. A red and white animal is struggling in one of them, and is killed with a blow of his stick and hung up in the thorn-tree, Knight saying that the young stoats will come there looking round after her, and that he expects to get the whole litter by the end of the week.

Every morning as I sat at my window writing I used to see Knight taking food to the great mastiff that was kept some twenty yards from the house: a poor silent

animal, always on a chain, to whom the glory of strangling a poacher never came. Colville bought a bloodhound; it was thought she might be useful for tracking, but she was a useless, timid bitch, to whom we could never teach anything, but some of her puppies learned to follow a trail in Freshcombe Bottom. Close to the house there were ten couples of beagles—hard, wiry, blue-haired beagles; and all these are forgotten but Sailor Lad, who could find his way over any fence, and would put his nose down and trail a rabbit when he could run no faster than a hedgehog. We all loved him for his cleverness, and waited eagerly for the first shooting, feeling sure that he would lead the pack; but Sailor Lad was gun-shy.

The squire and I were very fair shots; we could be counted upon to shoot well forward, hitting the rabbit in the head, spoiling him as little as possible for the market; but in spite of our careful shooting, Colville soon found that the profit that could be made on shot rabbits would not pay the interest of the large sum of money that had been spent on the house and hurdles. He determined to make an end of the shooting-parties, and told me one night how he thought the rabbits might be netted. The furze must be planted in strips with eighty yards of feeding ground between each strip. The rabbits would leave the furze at dawn, and the nets could be lifted. It would not be difficult to invent some mechanism to lift them quickly, so that the rabbits would not have time to get back into the furze.

"But the replanting of the furze," I said, "would keep the whole of the Sussex militia at work for——"

I was about to say for ten years, but Colville, interrupting me, said that he did not propose the work should be done all at once, and I answered that I hoped he did not propose to himself any such job. It is not wise to argue with a man who has just risen from an unsatisfac-

tory examination of his accounts, and later, after some tactless advice of mine to leave such matters as the catching of the rabbits to his keeper, he lost his temper, and, rushing to the door, threw it open and begged of me to retire to my own apartments.

When he called me down to breakfast next morning I heard a tremor in his voice, and after some injudicious attempt at explanation we seemed to come to a tacit understanding that it would be better to let the matter drop. He was very wrathful, his temper had been sorely tried, and for a week at least I am sure that I must have seemed to him a cruel, unsympathetic fellow. It is not to be doubted that I was in fault. But Colville could not see that it was my overflowing sympathy that prevented me from observing that rule of conduct which must be observed if two men would live together; each must keep from asking the other questions, and from criticizing the other's projects. It would have been interesting to debate this point with him, but Colville was not much interested at any time in criticism of the human mind. He had an ear, however, for music, and whistled beautifully going up and down stairs; and a few days after, hearing that the nightingales were singing in the coombe, we went out to listen to them.

"In yon thorn you'll find him," Knight said, and we moved on quietly till we came within sight of the insignificant brown bird that had just arrived, possibly from Algeria. Not a wind stirred in the tall grass, nor was there a cloud in the sky; a dim gold fading into grey and into blue, darkening overhead. A ghostly moon floated in the south, and the blue sailless sea was wound about the shoulders of the hills like a scarf. A fairer evening never breathed upon this world, nor did a lovelier prospect ever enchant human eyes, and Colville and I sat, a twain enchanted. It was one of those evenings when confidences rise to the lips, and Colville, as if to show me

that he had forgotten our quarrel, confided new projects to me. In years to come he hoped to fill the coombes with apple-trees; they would cost from half a crown to three and sixpence apiece to buy, and in some twenty years or more orchards would blossom every May from Thunders Barrow Barn all the way to the foot of the downs.

My imagination was touched, and we returned through the blue dusk delighted with each other, fearful lest our lives should not continue to be lived at Freshcombe till the end; we may have even dreamed of our graves under the apple boughs, and when we reached the top of the hill we had reached also the top of our friendship.

A few days afterwards the evenings began to seem a little tedious; all I had to say to Colville I had said, for the time being, at least, and his sisters and his mother and his father, whom I loved well, were always glad to see me, and the walk was pleasant along the hillsides, and it was pleasant to enter that Italian house under the ilex-trees and to find them all glad of my company. The squire liked me to stay on after dinner to play billiards with him, and to keep to the sheep path without missing it on a dark night was difficult, so I was often persuaded to stay the night. These visits became more numerous, and I went to London more frequently. Life, although pleasant at the top and at the foot of the downs, was too restricted in view for the purpose of my literature. "If one wants to write, one has to live where writing is being done," I said, and again I left my friends, this time for a still longer absence, and I might never have returned to them if the Boer War had not brought me down to Sussex to find out if there were anything in England, in the country, in the people with whom I could still sympathize.

The train that I was returning to my friends by did not pass through Brighton, but came through Preston Park by what is known as the loop-line, and as we approached Shoreham my thoughts were bent on that house far away

among the hills. It was not likely that I should find Colville as Pro-Boer as myself: his long militia service would render an active Pro-Boer policy impossible, but he might regard the war as a mistake; and, feeling myself to be in a distinctly reasonable mood, I decided that if Colville would agree to regard the war as a mistake we might come to terms.

About a quarter of a mile lay between their house and the station, and up that straight road I walked, wondering if a great deal of my admiration for the country might be attributed to my love of the people who lived at the foot of those hills, and catching sight of a somewhat shapeless line, nowise beautiful in itself, I said: "It may be so; but the downs must not be judged by one hillside. The squire will lend me a horse, and over to Findan I will go to-morrow. Only after a long ride shall I know if I still love the downs." And as this resolution formed in my mind I heard the squire calling me.

He was on the top of the stile, coming out of the cornfield, and it was pleasant to see him cross it so easily, and to see him still dressed in breeches and gaiters, hale as an old tree, and not unlike one—just as spare and as rugged. He gave me a hand covered with a hard reddish skin, like bark, and the shy smile that I knew so well trickled down his wide mouth.

We walked on together in delightful sympathy, but had not gone very far when we caught sight of Colville coming down the drove-way, walking very fast, his shoulders set well back, his toes turned out militia fashion. As the drove-way led only to the downs, it could hardly have been otherwise than that he had been to Freshcombe, so I asked after the rabbits. He said that he was thinking of letting the place, and his voice and manner left me in no doubt that he did not wish to talk about business, a thing that never happens when business is going well with a man. It may, therefore, have been to escape from further

questions that he begged me to excuse him if he walked on in front, saying he had some letters to write which he wished to go away by the night's post. But he had not gone very far when the squire said, in that low, sad voice which is the best part of my recollection of him, that Colly had gone to work too expensively, and had left too many rabbits on the ground. All my sympathy was aroused on the instant, but the squire's talk was always in sudden remarks, and as he required a long silence between each, we had passed through the gate leading to the lawn before he spoke again. Something was preparing in his mind, but before he could utter it we met Florence and Dulcie, whom I had hitherto thought of as blond Saxon girls; they were now middle-aged women, Dulcie looking as old as Florence, though younger by a couple of years; silent women, a little abrupt in their speech, more like their father than their mother.

Their mother's portrait might be introduced into the present text if it had not been written years ago and published in a volume entitled *Memoirs of My Dead Life*. My portrait is too long for quotation; it cannot be curtailed by me, at least; and paraphrase is out of the question to a man who has written something that he felt deeply, and written, he thinks, truly. The pages entitled *A Remembrance* would have enhanced any charm that my narrative may have, but the omission cannot be avoided. My reader must read them in the *Memoirs,* and I doubt not that when he has read them he will ask himself the question which I am now asking myself: would her gay, kindly mind have saved me from the folly of talking of the Boer War during dinner? If he has learned to know me at all, he will probably think she would have failed. The fact that I had come down to Sussex to escape from opinions did not save me from talking of the value of small nationalities before the soup tureen was removed from the table, and to the dear squire, who thought with-

out circumlocutions, plain simple South Saxon that he was. It was enough for him to know that his country was at war, and he answered:

"My dear Rory, the Boers invaded our territory."

"Invaded our territory!" I cried. "Yes, when Chamberlain declared that he would settle all difference without further parley and called out the reserves. It was not till then that the Boers crossed your frontiers."

Colville, who had twenty years of militia service behind him, curled his long moustache, and I could see that he was deeply shocked to hear a friend openly espouse the cause of England's enemies. Dulcie and Florence finished their dinners in a more complete silence than was usual even for them; they were not company women, of little use in chorus, only in duologues.

The squire sat holding a piece of cake in both his hands, as if he were afraid that somebody would take it from him, and as he munched it he kept his eyes fixed on the cake itself with an expression on his face that plainly read, "I'll have another piece presently." Colville and I had often noticed this little trick of his, and had laughed over it. The charm of domestic life is its intensity; each learns to know the other in his or her every peculiarity, physical and mental. We had often noticed the little habit of the squire's of waggling his foot from time to time when he lay back in his armchair in the billiard-room after dinner, puffing at his pipe in silence. Colville had drawn my attention to it, and to the old slippers and the grey socks. Colville was a friendly fellow, with a good deal of the squire's natural kindness in him and a disposition for a pleasant talk; but when I went to —— for the last time I found him more morose than ever I had seen him before. It was the rabbit farm much more than my remarks of the English Generals in South Africa that rendered him so solemn. The squire was often silent, but he was never solemn; and he often broke the silence

abruptly with a remark that showed we had never been far from his thoughts. But Colville was so preoccupied with his business that as soon as he had finished his pipe he went to his brown-paper parcel, which he untied, and produced his diary. His entries were in arrear, he said, and began his preparations for transcribing his life. They were always the same: First he sought for scribbling-paper, and taking his letters from his breast pocket he utilized the envelopes, cutting them open carefully. It took him some time to unclasp his penknife, and to sharpen the pencil with which he drafted out the events of the last three days. Then he tramped out of the room, his toes well turned out, returning with pen and ink and blotting-paper. The diary was unlocked, and getting it well before him he copied his notes in a calligraphy that would have honoured a medieval scrivener.

"Rory, what has become of the chest of cigars?"

With this remark the squire broke the silence abruptly and laughed—timidly, for he was conscious of a change in the atmosphere. All the same, he laughed, for he liked to remember how on the occasion of my first visit he had offered me a cheroot, but I had gone upstairs saying, "Perhaps you would like one of my cigars," and returned with an oaken chest containing about a thousand of all kinds. My visit was only for a few days, and in the squire's recollection I had said: "Well, you see, one can only carry half a dozen cigars in a case, and if one brings a box one never knows if anyone will care for that brand, so I thought it safer to bring the chest."

When the squire spoke of this chest of cigars of thirty years ago, he never failed to speak of my adventure that very same evening at Shoreham Gardens, whither I had insisted on going, though Colville had refused to accompany me; nothing should induce him to set foot, he said, in the place again, and he strove to dissuade me with the assurance that on Saturday nights it was frequented by

London roughs come down for the day, and that I would certainly get into some trouble; but I had gone there in spite of all his warnings. The family had sat up waiting my return, anxious for my safety, and it appears from the squire's narrative that I had returned about midnight with a long tale of adventure and an eye that was closing rapidly.

It was a little boring to me to listen to these stories of long ago; they had lost all interest for me, and the squire's next anecdote I had clean forgotten: how on the Monday his keeper had been peppered by me—it is true at eighty yards—because he persisted in paunching rabbits while still alive, though I had told him I did not approve of such cruelty. The squire was in a loquacious mood that evening, and added some hunting anecdotes, in which Colville had a share, and the relation of these interrupted his son's calligraphy. A little later we went to our several beds, myself depressed and hopeless, anxious to forget in sleep that I had been unable to keep the Boer War out of the conversation.

Sleep closed over me, and next morning I awoke thinking that perhaps it might be as well to go back to London by the twelve o'clock from Brighton; but the ride to Findan had been mentioned overnight, and just as if nothing had happened, the squire told me after breakfast that he had ordered his horse to be saddled for me. Colville said he would not be able to meet me at Freshcombe, and in a voice that did not seem altogether friendly. He gave me his hand, however, saying that he would bid me good-bye, since I was going away by the five o'clock. His sisters went to their different occupations, expecting me back for lunch, Florence hoping I would not talk any more about that horrid war, Dulcie lingering to ask me why I wanted to go to Findan, and on such a day! I mentioned a horse, but did not know what answer to give back when she reminded me that the horse fair is in May,

and reading suspicions of some woman in her eyes, I sprang into the saddle and rode away.

"A new nag," the squire had said; "she goes easily on the roads, but pulls a bit on the downs." A rushing, querulous animal, lean as a rake, I soon discovered her to be. A hide hardly thicker than a glove saved her but little from the cold showers and the hard winds that rushed down upon us from the hills. "A very different day," I said as I pulled at her, "from the day that the squire and I rode over to Findan to the fair." One of my pleasantest recollections was that ride, and despite my exasperated humour it was impossible for me to resist the temptation, as I rode down the valley, to recall how the squire and myself had gone out on horseback one morning in May, looking, as we jogged along side by side by the edge of the valley through which the Adur flows, like figures out of an old ballad. Never did larks rise out of the grass and soar roystering as abundantly as they did that morning. We walked, we trotted, we cantered our horses till we came to Findan's sunny hollow filled with its fair. Many horses were at tether, some were being trotted up and down by the gipsies. We reined in to see a boy ride a bay pony on a halter over a gate held up for the jump in the middle of the field, and while the squire talked with an acquaintance, I sat at gaze, lost in admiration of a group of comely larches; they seemed to me like women engaged with their own beauty, so gracefully did they loll themselves on the sweet wind, every one, I felt sure, aware of her own long shadow on the grass. Our returning, though less vividly remembered, was not less pleasing than our going forth, and my humour must have been harsh indeed that February day to have imperilled so delightful a recollection by riding to Findan alone under dark skies and through bitter winds along grey river lands. It was not in my intention, I suppose, to find Sussex beautiful, and the dun tumult

of the downs showing against the rainy sky suggested the welcome thought that I had been befooled, and that this English country was the ugliest in the world, and its weather the worst.

"Not a living thing in sight, not even a stray sheep in the wintry hollow," I said, and turned my horse's head towards Freshcombe, asking myself how I ever could have thought the downs beautiful. By what distortion of sight? By what trick of the brain? Because of her? And I rode thinking of her presence in one room and in another, until the day described in *A Remembrance* floated by, and we following all that remained of her to Shoreham churchyard.

Death is in such strange contradiction to life that it is no matter for wonder that we recoil from it, and turn to remembrances, and find recompense in perceiving that those we have loved live in our memories as intensely as if they were still before our eyes; and it would seem, therefore, that we should garner and treasure our past and forbear to regret partings with too much grief, however dear our friends may be; for by parting from them all their imperfections will pass out of sight, and they will become dearer and nearer to us. The present is no more than a little arid sand dribbling through the neck of an hour-glass; but the past may be compared to a shrine in the coigne of some sea-cliff, whither the white birds of recollections come to roost and rest awhile, and fly away again into the darkness. But the shrine is never deserted. Far away up from the horizon's line other white birds come, wheeling and circling, to take the place of those that have left and are leaving. So did my memories of her seem to me as they came to me over the downs; her unforgettable winsomeness, her affection for me, her love of her husband and of her children, were remembered, and the atrocious war which forbade me to

love them in the present could not prevent me from loving them in the past.

My meditations were suddenly interrupted by the scratched and deserted appearance of the hillside, and on looking through the iron hurdles I could see that what the squire had said was true; in trying to find the most profitable way of catching his rabbits Colville had allowed too many to remain on the ground. Knight had rid the warren of every stoat, and the foxes had been driven out, but one cannot disturb the balance of Nature with impunity, and after eating all the grass the rabbits had eaten the bark of the furze, and now there were only a few dry sticks left. I found another desert in the coombe; the rabbits had climbed into the thorn-trees and barked them. "These will never blossom again," I said, as I rode amid sand-heaps and burrows innumerable, without, however, seeing anywhere a white scut. "Only rabbits can destroy rabbits; and the Belgian hares—what has become of them?" I asked, remembering how haplessly they used to hop about after the keeper, unable to thrive on the down grass. Every season saw fewer of them, and it is doubtful if any had mated with the wild rabbit, so all our labour in the back-yard had been in vain.

The lambs bleated after the ewes, a raven balanced himself in the blast on the lookout for carrion, and after watching the bird for some time I rode along the iron fence. The lodge seemed deserted, and I asked myself what would become of the iron hurdles. "Will he sell them as scrap-iron and allow Nature to redeem the hills from trace of our ambitions?" I wondered, and rode away upon my own errand, which, I reminded myself, was not to muse over the destruction of Freshcombe, but to find out if there were one spot on the downs which still appealed to my sympathies. An ugly, rolling country it all seemed: hill after hill rolled up from the sea with deep valleys set between, in which the flock follows the

bell-wether. It was annoying to think that these valleys had once inspired thoughts of the patriarchal ages—a vulgar valley only a few miles from Brighton.

But if the downs didn't please me the weald would, and I rode by the windmill, its great arms roaring as they went round in the blast, frightening my horse, and sat for a long time studying, with hatred, the dim blue expanse that lay before me like a map: Beading, Edburton, Poynings, New Horton, I knew well; Folking and Newtimber far away, lost in violet haze. And I could see, or fancied I could see, the brook which Colville had jumped years ago—some twelve or fourteen feet of water; he had described it many a time as we sat over the fire smoking our pipes in Freshcombe.

"A landscape," I said, "that Rubens might have thought worth painting, but which Ruysdael would have turned from, it being without a blue hill or melancholy scarp or torrent, or anything that raises the soul out of an engulfing materialism"; and all the things that I used to love—a red-tiled cottage at the end of a lane with a ponderous team coming through a gateway, followed by a yokel in a smock frock—I hated, and in pursuit of my hatred I resolved to visit Beading, a town that I had once loved.

"But of what use to descend into it?" I asked myself; and without knowing why I was going there, I let my mare slide herself down the steep chalk path on her haunches. A straggling village street was all I could discover in Beading. "An ugly brick village," I said, and interested in my unrelenting humour, began the ascent of the downs instead of returning home by the road, so that I might give the restive mare the gallop she was craving for. She plunged her way up the hillside. Lord Leconfield's lands were crossed at a hand-gallop, and looking back at the windmill, I cursed it as an ugly thing, and remembering with satisfaction that there is none in Ire-

land, I reined up and overlooked the great space from Chanctonbury Ring past Lancing, whither Worthing lies, seeking to discover the reason why I liked the downs no longer. The names of the different fields as they came up in my mind irritated me. What name more absurd for that old barn than Thunders Barrow Barn? A few minutes later I was on the crest above Anchor Hollow, whither ships came in the old days, so it was said, and, but for the fact that my friends would lose their land, I doubt if I should have found any great cause for regret in the news that they were certain to come there again. I remembered how the coast towns light up in the evening: garlands of light reaching from Worthing to Lancing, to Amberley, to Shoreham, to Southwick, and on to Brighton. "There is no country in England; even the downs are encircled with lights"; and my thoughts turned from them to the dim waste about Lough Carra, only lighted here and there by tallow dips. Passing from Mayo to Galway, I remembered Edward's castle and the Burran Mountains, and the lake out of which thirty-six wild swans had risen while Yeats told me of *The Shadowy Waters;* and with such distant lands and such vague, primeval people in my mind, it was impossible for me to appreciate any longer the sight of ploughing on the downs. I used to like to stand and watch old Rogers lift the coulter from the vore when he came to the headland, and the great horses turn, the ploughboy yarking and lashing his whip all the time; but now my humour was such that I could hardly answer his cheery "Goodday, sir"; and when the squire asked me how the mare had carried me, I said that she didn't like the ploughboy's whip, and very nearly got me off her "ba'ack," as old Rogers would say.

"He was just at the end of his vore, and the horses were just a-comin' round."

"So you no longer care about our down speech," the squire said.

He would have wished me to stay on for a few days, for the sake of his billiards in the evening, and the conversation which he got from me and could not get from his son; but Dulcie said that it would be better if I should go away and come down again, and Florence seemed to agree with her that I had not been as nice this time as I had been on other occasions. So I am certain that there must have been a mingled sadness and perplexity in my eyes on bidding these dear friends of mine good-bye. I must have known that the friendship of many years—one that meant much to all of us—was now over, ended, done to death by an idea that had come into my life some months ago, without warning, undesired, uncalled for. It had been repulsed more than once, and with all the strength I was capable of, but it had gotten possession of me all the same, and it was now my master, making me hate all that I had once loved.

CHAP. XIV.

THE best friends a man ever had, yet they had been blown away like thistledown; and Sussex was no longer beautiful: "an ugly, suburban country, in which only a lust for gold thrives." And leaning back in my seat, I fell to rejoicing that after a few more rehearsals of *The Bending of the Bough* I should be back among Irish hills again.

The Irish Literary Theatre was going over to Dublin with three plays—*The Bending of the Bough* (my rewritten version of Edward's play, *The Tale of a Town*), Edward's own beautiful play *Maeve,* and a small play, *The Last Feast of the Fianni,* by Miss Milligan. Edward, who had cast himself again for baggage-man, was going to take the company over, and we were to follow him—

Lady Gregory, Yeats, and myself; and when I got into the railway-carriage after them at Euston, their soft western accent fell soothingly on my ear, recalling the peat. Our project drew us together; we were delightfully intimate that morning; and I remember my elation while watching Yeats reading the paper I had written on the literary necessity of small languages. It was to be read by me at a lunch that the Irish Literary Society was giving in our honour, and in it some ideas especially dear to Yeats had been evolved: that language after a time becomes like a coin too long current—the English language had become defaced, and to write in English it was necessary to return to the dialects. Language rises like a spring among the mountains; it increases into a rivulet; then it becomes a river (the water is still unpolluted), but when the river has passed through a town the water must be filtered. And Milton was mentioned as the first filter, the first stylist.

Never did I hear so deep a note of earnestness in Yeats' voice as when he begged of me not to go back upon these opinions. They were his deepest nature, but in me they were merely intellectual, invented so that the Gaelic League should be able to justify its existence with reasonable, literary argument. Lady Gregory sat in the corner, a little sore, I think, feeling, and not unnaturally, that this fine defence of the revival of the Irish language should come from her poet, instead of coming, as it did, from me. In this she was right, but an apology for the prominent part I was taking in this literary and national adventure would make matters worse. The most I could do to make my intrusion acceptable to her was to welcome all Yeats' emendations of my text with enthusiasm.

There were passages in this lecture intended to capture the popular ear, and they succeeded in doing this in spite of the noise of coffee-cups (as soon as the orator rises the waiters become unnaturally interested in their work);

but I can shout, and when I had shouted above the rattle that I had arranged to disinherit my nephews if they did not learn Irish from the nurse that had been brought from Arran, everybody was delighted. The phrase that Ireland's need was not a Catholic, but a Gaelic University, brought a cloud into the face of a priest. Edward agreed with me, adding, however, that Gaelic and Catholicism went hand in hand—a remark which I did not understand at the time, but I learnt to appreciate it afterwards. There were some cynics present, Gaelic Leaguers, who, while approving, held doubts, asking each other if my sincerity were more than skin-deep; and it was whispered at Edward's table that I had come over to write about the country and its ideas, and would make fun of them all when it suited my purpose to do so. It would take years for me to obtain forgiveness for a certain book of mine, Edward said, and reminded me that Irish memories are long. But in time, in time.

"When I am a grey-headed old man," I answered, and went back to England. "Irish speakers are dying daily and going to America, and the League will not avail itself of my services. The folly of it! The folly of it!" I muttered over my fire for the next three months, until one morning a telegram was handed to me. It was from the League's secretary. "Your presence is requested at a meeting to be held in the Rotunda to protest against——"

What the League would protest against on that occasion has been forgotten, but my emotion on reading that telegram will never be forgotten. Ireland had not kept me out in the cold, looking over the half-door for years, as Edward had anticipated—only three months. The telegram must be understood to mean complete forgiveness. "But they will want a speech from me, and I am the only living Irishman that cannot speak for ten minutes. A speech of ten minutes means two thousand words, and

every morning I fail to dictate two thousand words. My dictations are only so much rigmarole, mere incentives to work, and have to be all rewritten. On the edge of a platform one cannot say, 'Forget what I have said; I'll begin again.' One cannot transpose a paragraph, or revise a sentence. I can't go, I can't go"; and my feet moved towards the writing-table. But it was as difficult for me to write "No" as it was to write "Yes." "The only Irishman living who cannot make a speech, the only one that ever lived," I added, sinking into an armchair, awakening from a painful lethargy by the sudden thought that perhaps the secretary of the Gaelic League might be persuaded to allow me to read a paper at the meeting. I could do that. But time was lacking to write the paper. Midday! And the train left Euston at eight forty-five. *Evelyn Innes* would have to be abandoned. The secretary should have given longer notice. A man of letters cannot uproot himself at a moment's notice. Leave Owen Asher in the middle of Evelyn's bed to write an argument on the literary necessity of small languages! Impossible! All the same, I could not spend the evening in Victoria Street while my kinsmen were engaged in protesting against the abominable language of the Saxon. "A worn-out, defaced coin"; and I sought for an old shilling in my pocket. Finding one of George the Third, and looking at the blunted image, I said: "That is the English language. But the Irish language is pure of journalists, of commerce, of literature. It is what the Italian language was when Dante decided to abandon the Latin"; and my thoughts melted into nothingness, like the steam of the train that would rattle through the shires, through Rugby, Crewe, and Chester; we should then be within view of the Welsh mountains; and then I heard the sea, and saw the train circling through Aber, where Stella was painting flocks and herds. It would not stop for me to pick her up, but Bangor is only a few miles farther on.

The simplest plan would be to meet her on board the boat.

"Let Stella be the die that shall decide whether I go or stay."

An act relieves the mind from the strain of thinking, and I believed everything to be settled until her telegram arrived, saying she would meet me on board the boat. Then, for some reason which I am unable to give here, the journey seemed again impossible, and my indecisions continued until evening, and expressed themselves in five telegrams.

"Five telegrams," she said, when I came up the gangway. "Two asking me to come, two telling me not to come, and the last one reaching me only in time. You have a servant to pack your things, but in lodgings——"

"Stella dear, I know, but the fault isn't mine. I came into the world unable to decide whether I should catch the train or remain at home. But don't think that my vacillations proceed from selfishness. Agonies were endured while walking up and down Victoria Street between my flat and the post-office; the sending of each telegram seemed to settle the matter, but half-way down the street I would stop, asking myself if I should go or stay, and all the time knowing, I suppose, in some sort of unconscious way, that my love of you would not allow me to miss the pleasure of finding you, a lonely, dark figure, leaning over the bulwarks. How good of you to come!"

"Yes, it was good of me, for, really, five telegrams! Would you like to see them?"

"No, no; throw them away."

She crushed the telegrams in her hand and dropped them into the sea.

"You were vexed and perplexed, but I suffered agonies. About some things I am will-less, and for half my life I believed myself to be the most weak-minded person in the world."

"But you are not weak-minded. I never knew anyone

more determined about some things. Your writing——"

"Aren't you as determined about your painting? You have sent me out of your studio, preferring your painting to me. But we haven't met under that moon for disputation. Here you are and here am I, and we're going to Ireland together."

The boat moved away from the pier, steaming slowly down the long winding harbour, round the great headland into the sea; and finding that we were nearly the only passengers on board, and that the saloon was empty, we ensconced ourselves at the writing-table, and while dictating to her, I admired her hand, slender, with strong fingers that held the pen, accomplishing a large, steady, somewhat formal writing, which would suggest to one interested in handwriting a calm, clear mind, never fretted by small, mean interests; and if he were to add, a mind contented with the broad aspect of things, he would prove to me that her soul was reflected in her manuscript as clearly as in her pictures.

Nothing is more endearing than mutual work, and it was that night on board the boat and next morning, when, uncomplaining, she followed me to the writing-table, that I realized how beautiful was her disposition. And when the finishing sentences were written, it seemed that the time had come for me to consider her pleasure. She had never been in Dublin before, and would like to see the National Gallery. We hung together over the railings, admiring a Mantegna in the long room, and afterwards a Hogarth—a beautiful sketch of George the Third sitting under a canopy with his family. We talked of these, and stood a long time before Millais' "Hearts are Trumps," Stella explaining the painting and exhibiting her mind in many appreciative subtleties. No one talked painting better than she, and it was always a delight to me to listen to her; but that day my attention was distracted from her and from the pictures by an

intolerable agony of nerves. The repose, the unconsciousness of my animal nature, seemed withdrawn, leaving me nothing but a mere mentality. In a nervous crisis one seems to be aware of one's whole being, of one's fingernails, of the roots of one's hair, of the movements of one's very entrails. One's suffering seems, curiously enough, in the stomach, a sort of tremor of the entrails. There, I have got it at last, or the physical side of it! Added to which is the throb of cerebral perplexity. Why not run away and escape from this sickness? And the sensation of one's inability to run away is not the least part of one's suffering. One rolls like a stone that has become conscious, and often on my way to the Rotunda the thought passed through my mind that I must love Ireland very much to endure so much for her sake. Yet I was by no means sure that I loved Ireland at all. Before this point could be decided I had lost my way in many dark passages. But the platform was at last discovered, and there was Hyde, to whom I told that I had come over at the request of the secretary, having received a wire yestermorning from him, saying my presence was indispensable at the meeting. He did not seem to know anything about the matter, and it was a disappointment to find that he did not seem to think my presence as indispensable as the secretary had done in his telegram. Perhaps my face betrayed me, for he tried to hide his indifference under an excessive effusion which seemed to aggravate my nervousness.

An extraordinary indigence of speech, and an artificiality of sentiment caught my ear, and I felt that it would be impossible to restrain from an outburst if he were to say again, in answer to the simple statement that I arrived this morning:

"Now, did you come across last night? You don't tell me so? Tank you, tank you. You'll have a great reception."

"About the reception I care not a fig. I came over because it seemed to me to be my duty."

"Did you, now? It was good of you."

"But I am suffering something that words can't express, and it will be kind in you to call upon me as soon as you have finished speaking."

"MacNeil follows me. I'm sorry for you; from the bottom of my heart I'm sorry."

"Well, Hyde, if you don't hasten I'm afraid I shall have to go away. There is a trembling in my stomach that I would explain."

Somebody called him; a shuffling of chairs was followed by a sudden silence, and soon after a torrent of verbiage poured through Hyde's black moustache; threats, abuse, denunciations. While he stood bawling at the edge of the platform I saw the great skull and its fringe of long black hair with extraordinary lucidity, and the slope of the temples and the swell of the bone above the nape, the insignificant nose and the droop of the moustache through which his Irish frothed like porter, and when he returned to English it was easy to understand why he desired to change the language of Ireland.

The next speaker was a bearded man of middle height and middle age, forty or thereabouts, a post-office official whose oratory was more reasonable and dignified than our President's, and perhaps for that reason it was less successful despite its repetitions and commonplace. But these qualities, which I had begun to see were essential in Irish oratory, were not considered sufficient; the audience missed the familiar note of vituperation. MacNeil was looked upon as good enough, as small ale would be by the average Coombe toper. "What they want is porther"; and feeling that my paper would interest nobody, I appealed to Hyde again, and begged him to call on me and let me get it over.

Before he could do so he said he would have to call

upon two priests, Father Meehan and Father Hogarty, and these men spoke whatever happened to come into their heads, always using twenty words where five would have been too many, and they rambled on to their own pleasure and to that of the audience. Snatches of their oratory still linger in my ears. I remember "the language that our forefathers spoke in time of persecution . . . hermits and saints said their prayers in it"—which might be true, but which seemed to imply that since the introduction of the English language saints had declined in Ireland. The next speaker, referring to the eloquent words of the last speaker, reminded the audience that not a line of heresy had been written in Irish, an assertion which recalled Father Ford's pamphlet. "He must have been reading it," I said to myself.

"Now, will you call on me?" I whispered to Hyde.

"I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart."

"Of what use to bring me over from England?"

"From the bottom of my heart! I must call upon——" and he called out some name that I have forgotten. The success of this speaker when he declared that "the dogs of war were to be loosed" was unbounded. In the vast and densely-packed building only one dissenting voice was heard. It did not come from the body of the hall, but from a man on the platform—a thick-set fellow, a working man, sitting in a chair next to me. While Hyde was speaking he had played impatiently with his hat—a bowler, worn at the brim, greasy and ingrained with dust, very like Whelan's. His hands were those of a joiner or carpenter or plumber. "Yet," I said to myself, "he hears that our President's speech isn't as beautiful as it should be." It seemed to me that in the midst of some turgid sentence I had heard him spitting, "Good God! Yes, yes; get on!" through his tawny moustache. "We all know that." And I had certainly heard him mutter while MacNeil was speaking, "If I'd known it was

to listen to this kind of stuff." While the reverend Fathers were rigmaroling he had only dared to shuffle his feet from time to time, making it clear, at all events to me, that he did not judge ecclesiastical oratory more favourably than lay, thereby winning my approval and sympathy, and inducing me to accept him as a pure, disinterested and very able critic, who might possibly find some small merit in the paper which I began to read as soon as the applause had ceased that followed upon the declaration that "the dogs of war were to be loosed." Before five lines were read I heard him shuffling his feet heavily; at the tenth line a loud groan escaped him; and when I began my third paragraph, which to my mind contained everything that could be said in favour of the literary necessity of the revival of small languages, I heard him mutter, "It isn't that sort of sophisticated stuff that we want"; and he muttered so loudly that there was a moment when it began to seem necessary to ask the audience to choose between us. His impatience increased with every succeeding speaker, and while wondering what his oratory would be like if Hyde were to give him a chance of exercising it, I saw him seize the coat-tails of a little man with a bibulous nose, who had been called upon to address the meeting. Had such a thing happened to me, my nerves would have given way utterly; but the little man merely lifted his coat-tails out of his assailant's reach, and when he had finished talking somebody proposed a vote of thanks. Then the meeting broke up rapidly, and as we were leaving the platform the disappointed orator put his hand on Hyde's shoulder.

"For two pins I'd tell you what I think about you"; and Hyde was asked to explain why he did not call upon him to speak.

"Your name wasn't given to me, sir."

"Wasn't I on the platform?"

"There were many on the platform that I didn't call

on to speak; I only called those on my list, and you weren't upon it."

"A fine lot of blatherers you had on your list, and every one of us sick listening to them."

As the retort seemed to me to be in the fine Irish style, I was tempted to stand by to listen, but fearing to exhibit a too impertinent curiosity, I followed the crowd regretfully out of the building, wondering what Stella would think of her first Gaelic League meeting; and my first, too, for that matter.

On the boat coming over, she had been assured that it was going to be a very grand affair, typical of the new spirit that was awaking in Ireland, and there was no denying that no very high intellectual level had been reached by anybody. My own paper, that in the making had seemed a fine thing, had faded away in the reading, and she couldn't but have been disappointed with it, if not, at all events with the unintellectual audience that had gathered to hear it. And the ridiculous wrangle between Hyde and the disappointed orator! She may have left her seat before it began. But, even without this episode, a clear-minded Englishwoman, as she undoubtedly was, couldn't have failed to have been struck by a certain absence of sincerity in the speeches. It would, perhaps, have been better if she hadn't come over; at all events, it was desirable that this meeting had not been her first glimpse of Ireland. Her tact and her affection for me would save her from the mistake of laughing at the meeting to my face . . . there was no real reason why I should regret having brought her over, only that the meeting had exhibited Ireland under a rough and uncouth aspect; worse still, as a country that was essentially insincere and frivolous, and I wanted her to like Ireland—it was unfortunate.

The man that hadn't been allowed to "blather," had described the meeting as "blather" (a word derived,

no doubt, from lather; and what is lather but froth?). Hyde had been all Guinness; and she must have laughed at the prattle of the priests. Though in sympathy with what they had come to bless—the revival of the Irish language—I had had to bite my lips when one of them started talking about "the tongue that their forefathers had spoken in time of persecution," and I had found it difficult to keep my patience when his fellow, a young cleric, said that he was in favour of a revival of the Irish language because no heresy had ever been written in it. A fine reason it was to give why we should be at pains to revive the language, and it had awakened a suspicion in me that he was just a lad—in favour of the Irish language because there was no thought in its literature. What interest is there in any language but for the literature it has produced or is going to produce? And there can be no literature when no mental activities are about. "Mental activity begets heresy," I muttered, and wandered to and fro, looking for Stella, hoping to find her not too seriously disappointed with her first glimpse into Irish Ireland. If she had only heard one good speech, or one note of genuine passion, however imperfectly expressed! "But Ireland lacks passion," I said, and pushed my way through the crowd. "It lacks ideas, and, worst of all, it lacks passion . . . all the same it is difficult to find Stella. Where the devil!—all froth, porther, porther," and I returned to that very magnanimous statement that the Irish language was worth reviving because no word of heresy had been written in it. "Which is a lie. Damn that priest!" I said. "Stella cannot have failed to see through his advocacy. Without heresy there can be no religion, for heresy means trying to think out the answer to the riddle of life and death for ourselves. We don't succeed, of course we don't, but we do lift ourselves out of the ruts when we think for ourselves—in other words, when we live. But acquiescence

in dogma means decay, dead leaves in the mire, nothing more. The only thing that counts is personal feeling. And if this be true, it may be said that Ireland has never shown any interest in religious questions—merely a wrangle between Protestants and Catholics."

Part of the speech of another orator started into my mind; he had said he would shoulder a musket—" he didn't say a rifle, mark you, but a musket; I wonder he didn't say a pike! Dead leaves in the mire, dead traditions, a people living on the tradition of '98. But there were heroes in '98. In those days men thought for themselves and lived according to their passions. But if the meeting I have just come from is to be taken as typical, Ireland has melted away. Maybe, to be revived again in the language . . . if the language can be revived. But can it be revived? Ah, there is Stella!"

Never did she seem so essentially English to me as at that moment—so English that I experienced a certain sense of resentment against her for wearing the look that, before the Boer War, had attracted me to her—I might say had attracted me even before I had seen her—that English air of hers which she wore with such dignity. Until I met her, the women I had loved were like myself, capricious and impulsive; some had been amusing, some charming, some pretty, and one had enchanted me by her joy in life and belief that everything she did was right because she did it. High spirits are delightful, but incompatible with dignity, and, deep down in my heart, I had always wished to love a chin that deflected, calm, clear, intelligent eyes, and a quiet and grave demeanour, for that is the English face, and the English face and temperament have always been in my blood; and it was doubtless these qualities that attracted me to my friends in Sussex. Stella might be more intelligent than they, or her intelligence was of a different kind—the measure of intellect differs in every individual,

but the temperament of the race (in essentials) is the same, and it endures longer. But now her very English appearance and temperament vexed me down Sackville Street, and my vexation was aggravated by the fact that it was impossible to tell her why I was so dissatisfied with her. She had not laughed at nor said a word in disparagement of the meeting, nor told me that, in seeking to revive the language, I was on a wild-goose chase. But, out of sorts with her I was, knowing myself all the while for a fool, and cursing myself as a weakling for not having been able to come to Ireland without her.

The incident seemed symbolic; neither country is able to do without the other; and it would have been easy for Stella and me to have quarrelled that evening, though we weren't man and wife. She spoke so kindly and warmly of the meeting, seeing all that was good in it, and laughing with such agreeable humour at the incident of the disappointed orator, which I could not keep myself from telling her when we got home, that I loved her, despite her English face and appearance, making her laugh thereby.

The tact of women cannot be overpraised; they have to exercise all their tact to live with us; and they do this very well, simulating an interest in our ideas, deceiving us—but how delightfully! Accepting the religions we invent, and the morals that we like to worry over, though they understand neither morals nor religions, only lovers, children and flowers. A wonderful race is the race of women, entirely misunderstood by men. So much more emotional than we are—lovely animal natures! On this subject it would be easy for me to write many pages, and perhaps they would be more interesting than the tale I have to tell. Even so, I should have to continue telling how, some months after my visit to Dublin, when the cloud cast by the meeting at the Rotunda upon my belief in the possibility of a Celtic Renaissance had dis-

solved, another escape from England presented itself, and was eagerly accepted. A letter arrived one morning from Yeats, summoning me to Ireland, so that we might come to some decision about *Diarmuid and Grania,* the play that we had agreed to write in collaboration. We had exchanged many letters, but as every one had seemed to estrange us, Lady Gregory had charged Yeats to invite me to Coole, where he was staying at the time; and reading in this letter a week spent in the very heart of Ireland, among lakes and hills, and the most delightful conversation in the world, I accepted the invitation with pleasure.

As I write, the wind whistles and yells in the street; the waves must be mountains high in the Channel; but the Irish Sea has always been propitious to me—all my crossings have been accomplished amid sparkling waves and dipping gulls, and the crossing that I am trying to remember when I went to Coole to write *Diarmuid and Grania* was doubtless as fine as those that had gone before. With my head filled with legends, I can see myself waiting eagerly for the beautiful shape of Howth to appear above the sea-line. Or, maybe, my memory fails me, and it may well have been that I crossed under the moon and stars, for I remember catching the morning mail from the Broadstone and journeying, pale for want of sleep and tired, through the beautiful county of Dublin, alongside of the canal; here and there it slipped into swamp, with an abandoned boat in the rushes. Outside the County Dublin the country begins to drop away into bogland, the hovel appears—there is a good deal of the West of Ireland all through Ireland—but as soon as the middle of Ireland has been crossed the country begins to improve; and, seeing many woods, I fell to thinking how Ireland once had been known as the Island of Many Woods, cultivated in patches, and overrun by tribes always at war one with the other. So it must

have been in the fourth century when Grania fled from Tara with Diarmuid; that was her adventure; and mine was to write Ireland's greatest love-story in conjunction with Yeats.

Athlone came into sight, and I looked upon the Shannon with a strange and new tenderness, thinking that it might have been in that very bed of rushes Grania lifted her kirtle, the sweetness of her legs blighting in Diarmuid all memory of his oath of fealty to Finn, and compelling him to take her in his arms, and in the words of the old Irish story-teller "to make a woman of her." Without doubt it would be a great thing to shape this primitive story into a play, if we could do it without losing any of the grandeur and significance of the legend, and I thought of the beauty of Diarmuid, and his doom, and how he should court it at the end of the second act when the great fame of Finn captures Grania's imagination. A wonderful act the third would be, the pursuit of the boar through the forest, the baying of Finn's great hounds—their names would appear beautiful in the text—Bran, Skealon, Lomaire.

In happy meditation mile after mile went by. Lady Gregory's station is Gort. Coole was beginning to be known to the general public at the time I went there to write *Diarmuid and Grania* with Yeats. Hyde had been to Coole, and had been inspired to write several short plays in Irish; one of them, *The Twisting of the Rope,* we hoped we should be able to induce Mr. Benson to allow us to produce after *Diarmuid and Grania.* If Yeats had not begun *The Shadowy Waters* at Coole he had at least written several versions of it under Lady Gregory's roof-tree. Æ had painted in the park; now I was going there. "In years to come Coole will be historic; later still, it will be legendary, a sort of Minstrelburg, the home of the Bell Branch Singers," I said, trying to keep my bicycle from skidding, for I had told the coachman

to look after my luggage and bring it with him on the car, hoping in this way to reach Coole in time for breakfast.

The sun was shining, but the road was dangerously greasy, and I had much difficulty in saving myself from falling. "All blue and white," I said, "is the morning, sweetly ventilated by light breezes from the Burran Mountains. We shall all become folk-lore in time to come, Finns and Diarmuids and Usheens, every one of us, and Lady Gregory a new Niamh who——" At that moment my bicycle nearly succeeded in throwing me into the mud, but by lifting it on to the footpath, and by giving all my attention to it, I managed to reach the lodge-gates without a fall.

"A horn," I said, "should hang on the gate-post, and the gate should not open till the visitor have blown forth a motif; but were this so Yeats would be kept a long time waiting, for he is not musical." It was pleasant to follow the long, blue drive for nearly a mile, through coarse fields, remembering the various hollows as they came into view, and the hillocks crowned by the hawthorns that Æ had painted last year.

At the end of the long drive one comes upon the modest house, the plain walls unadorned save by a portico and masses of reddening creeper. The dining-room window dispelled thoughts of literature for the moment, and this was not extraordinary, for I had been up since six, and had refrained from breakfast in the train, not wishing to spoil my appetite for hot soda-bread, which I knew I should get at Coole: its excellence is not forgotten, however long the interval between the present and the past visit may have been.

Yeats was composing, Lady Gregory said, we should have to wait for him, and we waited, till, perforce, I had to ask for something to eat, and we sat down to a meal that was at once breakfast and lunch. Yeats still tarried,

and it was whispered round the table that he must have been overtaken by some sudden inspiration, and at this thought everyone was fluttered with care. Lady Gregory was about to send the servant up to know if the poet would like to have his breakfast in his room, when the poet appeared, smiling and delightful, saying that just as the clocks were striking ten the metre had begun to beat, and abandoning himself to the emotion of the tune, he had allowed his pen to run till it had completed nearly eight and a half lines, and the conversation turned on the embarrassment his prose caused him, forcing him to reconstruct his scenario. He would have written his play in half the time if he had begun writing it in verse.

As soon as we rose from the table Lady Gregory told us we should be undisturbed in the drawing-room till tea-time. Thanking her, we moved into the room; the moment had come, and feeling like a swordsman that meets for the first time a redoubtable rival, I reminded Yeats that in his last letter he had said we must decide in what language the play should be written—not whether it should be written in English or in Irish (neither of us knew Irish), but in what style.

"Yes, we must arrive at some agreement as to the style. Of what good will your dialogue be to me if it is written, let us say, in the language of *Esther Waters?*"

"Nor would it be of any use to you if I were to write it in Irish dialect?"

Yeats was not sure on that point; a peasant Grania appealed to him, and I regretted that my words should have suggested to him so hazardous an experiment as a peasant Grania.

"We're writing an heroic play." And a long time was spent over the question whether the Galway dialect was possible in the mouths of heroes, I contending that it would render the character farcical. "Folk is always farce. It is not until the language has been strained

through many brilliant minds that tragedy can be written in it. Why did Balzac choose to write *Contes Drôlatiques* in Old French? Not because he was afraid of the Censor, but because Old French lends itself well to droll stories. Our play had better be written in the language of the Bible."

"Avoiding all turns of speech which immediately recall the Bible. You will not write 'Angus and his son Diarmuid which is in heaven,' I hope. We don't want to recall the Lord's Prayer. And, for the same reason, you will not use any archaic words. You will avoid words that recall any particular epoch."

"I'm not sure that I understand."

"The words 'honour' and 'ideal' suggest the Middle Ages, and should not be used. The word 'glory' is charged with modern idea—the glory of God and the glory that shall cover Lord Kitchener when he returns from Africa. You will not use it. The word 'soldier' represents to us a man that wears a red tunic; an equivalent must be found, 'swordsman' or 'fighting man.' 'Hill' is a better word than 'mountain'; I can't give you a reason, but that is my feeling, and the word 'ocean' was not known to the Early Irish, only the sea."

"We shall have to begin by writing a dictionary of the words that may not be used, and all the ideas that may not be introduced. Last week you wrote begging me not to waste time writing descriptions of Nature. Primitive man, you said, did not look at trees for the beauty of the branches and the agreeable shade they cast, but for the fruits they bore and the wood they furnished for making spear-shafts and canoes. A most ingenious theory, Yeats, and it may be that you are right; but I think it is safer to assume that primitive man thought and felt much as we do. Life in its essentials changes very little, and are we not writing about essentials, or trying to?"

Yeats said that the ancient writer wrote about things,

and that the softness, the weakness, the effeminacy of modern literature could be attributed to ideas.

"There are no ideas in ancient literature, only things," and, in support of this theory, reference was made to the sagas, to the Iliad, to the Odyssey, and I listened to him, forgetful of the subject which we had met to discuss.

"It is through the dialect," he said, "that one escapes from abstract words, back to the sensation inspired directly by the thing itself."

"But, Yeats, a play cannot be written in dialect; nor do I think it can be written by turning common phrases which rise up in the mind into uncommon phrases."

"That is what one is always doing."

"If, for the sake of one's literature, one had the courage to don a tramp's weed—you object to the word 'don'? And still more to 'weed'? Well, if one had the courage to put on a tramp's jacket and wander through the country, sleeping in hovels, eating American bacon, and lying five in a bed, one might be able to write the dialect naturally; but I don't think that one can acquire the dialect by going out to walk with Lady Gregory. She goes into the cottage and listens to the story, takes it down while you wait outside, sitting on a bit of wall, Yeats, like an old jackdaw, and then filching her manuscript to put style upon it, just as you want to put style on me."

Yeats laughed vaguely; his laugh is one of the most melancholy things in the world, and it seemed to me that I had come to Coole on a fruitless errand—that we should never be able to write *Diarmuid and Grania* in collaboration.

CHAP. XV.

A SEAT had been placed under a weeping ash for the collaborators, and in the warmth and fragrance of the

garden we spent many pleasant hours, quarrelling as to how the play should be written, Lady Gregory intervening when our talk waxed loud. She would cross the sward and pacify us, and tempt us out of argument into the work of construction with some such simple question as—"And your second act—how is it to end?" And when we were agreed on this point she would say:

"Let the play be written by one or the other of you, and then let the other go over it. Surely that is the best way—and the only way? Try to confine yourselves to the construction of the play while you are together."

Yeats had left the construction pretty nearly in my hands; but he could theorize as well about construction as about style, and when Lady Gregory left us he would say that the first act of every good play is horizontal, the second perpendicular.

"And the third, I suppose, circular?"

"Quite so. In the third act we must return to the theme stated in the first scene"; and he described with long, thin hands the shapes the act should take. "The first act begins with laying the feast for the Fianni; this is followed by a scene between Grania and the Druidess; then we have a short scene between King Cormac and his daughter. The Fianni arrive and Grania is at once captured by the beauty of Diarmuid, and she compels the Druidess (her foster-mother) to speak a spell over the wine, turning it into a drug that will make all men sleepy . . . now, there we have a horizontal act. You see how it extends from right to left?"

And while I considered whether he would not have done better to say that it extended from left to right, he told me that the second act was clearly perpendicular. Did it not begin far away in the country, at the foot of Ben Bulben? And after the shearing of a sheep which Diarmuid has performed very skilfully, Grania begins to speak of Finn who is encamped in the neighbourhood,

her object being to persuade Diarmuid to invite Finn to his dun. The reconciliation of Finn and Diarmuid is interrupted by Conan, who comes in telling that a great boar has broken loose and is harrying the country, and Diarmuid, though he knows that his destiny is to be killed by the boar, agrees to hunt the boar with Finn.

"What could be more perpendicular than that? Don't you see what I mean?" and Yeats' hands went up and down; and then he told me that the third act, with some slight alteration, could be made even more circular than the first and second were horizontal and perpendicular.

"Agreed, agreed!" I cried, and getting up, I strode about the sward, raising my voice out of its normal pitch until a sudden sight of Lady Gregory reminded me that to lose my temper would be to lose the play. "You'll allow me a free hand in the construction? But it's the writing we are not agreed about, and if the writing is altered as you propose to alter it, the construction will be altered too. It may suit you to prepare your palette and distribute phrases like garlands of roses on the backs of chairs. . . . But there's no use getting angry. I'll try to write within the limits of the vocabulary you impose upon me, although the burden is heavier than that of a foreign language. . . . I'd sooner write the play in French."

"Why not write it in French? Lady Gregory will translate it."

And that night I was awakened by a loud knocking at my door, causing me to start up in bed.

"What is it? Who is it? Yeats!"

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but an idea has just occurred to me."

And sitting on the edge of my bed he explained that the casual suggestion that I preferred to write the play in French rather than in his vocabulary was a better idea than he had thought at the time.

"How is that, Yeats?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"Well, you see, through the Irish language we can get a peasant Grania."

"But Grania is a King's daughter. I don't know what you mean, Yeats; and my French——"

"Lady Gregory will translate your text into English. Taidgh O'Donoghue will translate the English text into Irish, and Lady Gregory will translate the Irish text back into English."

"And then you'll put style upon it? And it was for that you awoke me?"

"But don't you think a peasant Grania——"

"No, Yeats, I don't, but I'll sleep on it and to-morrow morning I may think differently. It is some satisfaction, however, to hear that you can stand my English style at four removes." And as I turned over in the hope of escaping from further literary discussion, I heard the thin, hollow laugh which Yeats uses on such occasions to disguise his disapproval of a joke if it tells ever so little against himself. I heard him moving towards the door, but he returned to my bedside, brought back by a sudden inspiration to win me over to his idea that Grania, instead of running in front of her nurse gathering primroses as I wished her to do, might wake at midnight, and, finding the door of the dun on the latch, wander out into the garden and stand among the gooseberry-bushes, her naked feet taking pleasure in the sensation of the warm earth.

"You've a nice sense of folk, though you are an indifferent collector," I muttered from my pillow; and, as I lay between sleeping and waking, I heard, some time later in the night, a dialogue going on between two men —a young man seemed to me to be telling an old man that a two-headed chicken was hatched in Caibre's barn last night, and I heard the old man asking the young man if he had seen the chicken, and the young man

answering that it had been burnt before he arrived to see it. . . . After that I saw and heard no more till the dawn divided the window-curtains and the rooks began to fly overhead. "Coming," I said, "from the great rookeries at Tillyra."

The long morning was spent thinking of Yeats' talent, and wondering what it would come to eventually. If he would only—— But there is always an "only," and at breakfast there seemed very little chance of our ever coming to an agreement as to how the play should be written, for Lady Gregory said that Yeats had asked to have his breakfast sent upstairs to him, as he was very busy experimenting in rhyme. She spoke of Dryden, whose plays were always written in rhyme; we listened reverentially, and when we rose from table she asked me to come into the garden with her. It was on our way to the seat under the weeping ash that she intimated to me that the best way to put an end to these verbal disputes between myself and my collaborator would be to do what I had myself suggested yesterday—to write a French version of the play.

"Which I will translate," she said.

"But, Lady Gregory, wouldn't it be better for you to use your influence with Yeats, to persuade him to concede something?"

"He has made all the concessions he can possibly make."

"I don't know if you are aware of our difficulties?"

"It would be no use my taking sides on a question of style, even if I were capable of doing so," she said gently. "One has to accept Yeats as he is, or not at all. We are both friends of his, and he has told me that it is really his friendship for you which has enabled him——"

"To suggest that I should try to write the play in French!" I cried.

"But I will translate it with all deference to your style."

"To my French style! Good heavens! And then it is to be translated into Irish and back into English. Now I know what poor Edward suffered when I altered his play. Edward yielded for the sake of Ireland——" But as I was about to tell Lady Gregory that I declined to descend into the kitchen, to don the cap and apron, to turn the spit while the *chef des sauces* prepared his gravies and stirred his saucepans, the adventure of writing a play in French, to be translated three times back and forwards before a last and immortal relish was to be poured upon it, began to appeal to me. Literary adventures have always been my quest, and here was one; and seeing in it an escapement from the English language, which I had come to hate for political reasons, and from the English country and the English people, I said:

"It is impossible to write this play in French in Galway. A French atmosphere is necessary, and I will go to France and send it to you, act by act."

Yeats was overjoyed when the news was brought to his bedroom; he came down at once and began to speak brilliantly about the value of dialect, and a peasant Grania. If I did not like that, at all events a Grania——

"That would be racy of the soil," I said.

A cloud came into Yeats' face, but we parted the best of friends, and it was in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of a hotel sitting-room that I wrote the first scene of our second act in French—if not in French in a language comprehensible to a Frenchman.

Une caverne. GRANIA *est couchée sur une peau d'ours; se réveillant en sursaut.*

GRANIA.

J'ai entendu un bruit. Quelqu'un passe dans la nuit des rochers. Diarmuid!

DIARMUID.

Je t'ai fait peur.

GRANIA.

Non. Mais qu'est ce que tu m'apportes? Quels sont ces fruits d'or?

DIARMUID.

Je t'apporte des pommes, j'ai trouvé un pommier dans ces landes, très loin dans une vallée désolée. Cela doit être le pommier dont le berger nous a parlé. Regarde le fruit! Comme ces pommes sont belles! Cela doit être le pommier des admirables vertus. Le berger l'a dit.

(*Il donne la branche à* GRANIA.)

GRANIA.

Ces pommes sont vraiment belles, elles sont comme de l'or. (*Elle fait glisser une pomme dans sa robe.*) Les solitudes de ces landes nous ont sauvegardés de toute poursuite. N'est-ce pas, Diarmuid? Ici nous sommes sauvegardés. C'est la solitude qui nous sauvegarde, et ce pommier sacré dont le berger nous a parlé. Mais les pommes si belles doivent être le signe d'un grand malheur ou peut-être bien, Diarmuid, d'une grand joie. Diarmuid! j'entends des pas. Ecoute! Cherche tes armes!

DIARMUID.

Non, Grania, tu n'entends rien. Nous sommes loin de toute poursuite. (*On écoute et alors* DIARMUID *reprend le bouclier qu'il a jeté par terre; avançant d'un pas.*) Oui, Grania, quelqu'un passe dans la nuit des rochers. . . . Qui êtes-vous? D'où venez-vous? Pourquoi venez vous ici?

Entrent deux Jeunes Hommes.

1er JEUNE HOMME.

Nous venons de Finn.

DIARMUID.

Et vous venez pour me tuer?

1er JEUNE HOMME.

Oui.

GRANIA.

Vous êtes donc venus ici en assassins! Pourquoi cherchez-vous à tuer deux amants? Quel mal vous avons-nous donc fait? Nous sommes ici dans les landes inconnues, et si nous ne sommes pas morts c'est parce que la Nature nous a sauvegardés. La Nature aime les amants et les protège. Qu'avons nous donc fait pour que vous veniez aussi loin nous tuer?

2ème JEUNE HOMME.

Nous avons voulu faire partie du Fianna, et nous avons passé par toutes les épreuves de la prouesse que l'on nous a demandée.

1er Jeune Homme.

Nous avons fait des armes avec les guerriers de Finn.

2ème Jeune Homme.

La lance lourde et la lance légère, nous avons couru et sauté avec eux.

1er Jeune Homme.

Nous sommes sortis acclamés de toutes les épreuves.

Diarmuid.

Et vous êtes venus chercher la dernière épreuve. Finn vous a demandé ma tête?

1er Jeune Homme.

Avant d'être admis au Fianna il faut que nous apportions la tête de Diarmuid à Finn.

Grania.

Et ne savez-vous pas que tout le Fianna est l'ami de Diarmuid excepté Finn?

Diarmuid.

Ils veulent ma tête? Eh, bien! qu'ils la prennent s'ils le peuvent.

Grania.

Qui de vous attaquera Diarmuid le premier?

1er Jeune Homme.

Nous l'attaquerons tous les deux à la fois.

2ème Jeune Homme.

Nous ne venons pas ici faire des prouesses d'armes.

Diarmuid.

Ils ont raison, Grania, ils ne viennent pas ici faire des prouesses d'armes, ils viennent commes des bêtes cherchant leur proie; cela leur est égal comment.

(Ils commencent l'attaque; l'un est plus impétueux que l'autre, et il se met en avant. Diarmuid *se recule dans un étroit passage entre les rochers. Soudain il blesse son adversaire qui tombe.* Diarmuid *passe par dessus son corps et s'engage avec l'autre. Bien vite il le jette par terre et il commence à lui lier les mains, mais l'autre se lève et s'avance l'épée à la main gauche.* Diarmuid *donne son poignard à* Grania, *laissant à la charge de* Grania *l'adversaire qui est par terre, il attaque l'autre et dans quelques ripostes fait sauter l'épée de sa main. Pendant ce combat*

GRANIA *est restée assise le poignard en main. Tout de suite, l'homme ayant voulu se relever, elle le poignarde, et avance nonchalamment vers* DIARMUID.)

DIARMUID.

Ne le quitte pas.

GRANIA.

Il est mort.

DIARMUID.

Tu l'as tué?

GRANIA.

Oui, je l'ai tué. Et maintenant tue celui-ci, ce sont des lâches qui n'auraient osé t'attaquer un par un.

DIARMUID.

Je ne peux pas tuer un homme qui est sans armes. Regarde-le! Son regard me trouble, pourtant c'est Finn qui l'a envoyé. Laisse le partir.

GRANIA.

Les malfaiteurs restent les malfaiteurs. Il retournerait à Finn et il lui dirait que nous sommes ici. (*S'adressant à l'homme.*) Tu ne dis rien, tourne-toi pour que le coup soit plus sûr. Mets-toi contre le rocher. (*L'homme obéit.*)

DIARMUID.

Dans la bataille je n'ai jamais frappé que mon adversaire et je n'ai jamais frappé quand il n'était pas sur ses gardes. Et quand je le fis tomber, souvent je lui donnai la main, et j'ai souvent déchiré une écharpe pour étancher le sang de ses blessures. (*Il coupe un lambeau de son vêtement et l'attache autour du bras du jeune homme.*)

GRANIA.

Qu'est ce qu'il dira à Finn?

DIARMUID.

Je lui donne ces pommes d'or et Finn saura que ce n'est pas lui qui les a trouvées. Oui, je lui donnerai cette branche, et Finn saura que je tiens mon serment.

GRANIA.

Entre ses mains les pommes seront flétries, elles n'arriveraient pas à Finn si elles sont les pommes dont le berger nous a parlé, elles disparaîtraient comme une poussière légère. (DIARMUID *donne la branche à l'homme, et l'homme s'en va traînant le cadavre de son compagnon.*) Tu aurais dû ce tuer, il conduira Finn à cette caverne. Il faut que nous cherchions des landes plus désertes, plus inconnues.

DIARMUID.

Peut-être au bout de ces landes où il faut que nous nous cachions des années, peut-être trouverons nous une douce vallée paisible.

GRANIA.

Et alors, Diarmuid, dans cette vallée que se passerait-il entre nous?

DIARMUID.

Grania, j'ai prêté serment à Finn.

GRANIA.

Oui, mais le serment que tu as prêté à Finn ne te poursuit pas dans la forêt: les dieux à qui tu as fait appel ne régnent pas ici. Ici les divinités sont autres.

DIARMUID.

Si cet homme nous trahit, il y a deux sorties à cette caverne et comme tu dis il ne faut pas attendre ici, il faut que nous nous allions trés loin.

GRANIA.

Je ne puis vous suivre. Je pense à toi, Diarmuid, nuit et jour, et mon désir me laisse sans force; je t'aime, Diarmuid, et les pommes que tu as trouvées dans cette vallée désolée ne sont-elles pas un signe que ma bouche est pour ta bouche?

DIARMUID.

Je ne puis t'écouter . . . nous trouverons un asile quelque part. Viens au jour. La caverne te fait peur et elle me fait peur aussi. Il y a du sang ici et une odeur de sang.

GRANIA.

Restons, Diarmuid; tu es un guerrier renommé, et tu as vaincu deux hommes devant mes yeux. Mais, Diarmuid, la pomme qui est tombée dans ma robe . . . regarde-la; elle ose plus que toi. Nous avons des périls à traverser ensemble, les serments que tu as prêtés à Tara ne te regardent plus. Notre monde sera autre et nos divinités seront autres.

DIARMUID.

Mais j'ai prêté serment à Finn. Finn c'est mon frère d'armes, mon capitaine. Combien de fois nous avons été contre l'ennemi ensemble!—non, Grania, je ne puis.

(*Il la prend dans ses bras. La scène s'obscurçit.*)

GRANIA.

Le jour est pour la bataille et pour les périls, pour la poursuite et pour la fuite; mais la nuit est le silence pour les amants qui n'ont plus rien qu'eux-mêmes. (*Un changement de*

scène; maintenant on est dans une vallée pierreuse à l'entrée d'une caverne, à gauche un bois et le soleil commence à baisser.)

* * * * * *

The introduction of French dialogue into the pages of this book breaks the harmony of the English narrative, but there is no help for it; only by printing my French of Stratford atté Bowe can I hope to convince the reader that two such literary lunatics as Yeats and myself existed, contemporaneously, and in Ireland, too, a country not distinguished for its love of letters. The scene in the ravine, which follows the scene in the cave, was written in the same casual memory of the French language and its literature. We can think, but we cannot think profoundly, in a foreign language, and though a sudden sentiment may lift us for a while out of the common rut, we soon fall back and crawl along through the mud till the pen stops. Mine stopped suddenly towards the end of the act, and I wandered out of the reading-room into the veranda to ponder on my folly in having come to France to write *Diarmuid and Grania,* and to rail against myself for having accepted Yeats' insulting proposal.

When my fit of ill-temper had passed away, I admitted that reason would be amenable to the writing of *Diarmuid and Grania* in Irish, but to do that one would have to know the Irish language, and to learn it, it would be necessary to live in Aran for some years. A vision of what my life would be there rose up: a large, bright cottage with chintz curtains, and homely oaken furniture, and some three or four Impressionist pictures, and the restless ocean my only companion until I knew enough Irish for daily speech. But ten years among the fisher-folk might blot all desire of literature in me, and even if it didn't, and if I succeeded in acquiring Irish (which was impossible), it would be no nearer to the language spoken by Diarmuid and Grania than modern English is to Beowulf.

"But what is all this nonsense that keeps on drumming in my head about the Irish language and Anglo-Irish?" And I went out of the hotel into the street convinced that any further association with Yeats would be my ruin. Lady Gregory feared that I should break up the mould of his mind. "But it is he that is breaking up the mould of mine. I must get out of his way. And as for writing *Diarmuid and Grania* in French—not another line! My folly ends on the scene in my pocket, which I'll keep to remind me what a damned fool a clever man like Yeats can be when he is in the mood to be a fool."

A moment after, it seemed to me that it would be well to write and tell him that I would give the play up to him and Lady Gregory to finish; and I would have given them *Diarmuid and Grania* if it had not been my one Irish subject at the time. Life without a subject is not conceived easily by me; so I decided to retain it, and next day returned to England and to Sickert.

The pictures on the easels were forgotten, and the manuscripts in Victoria Street, so obsessed were we by the thought that, while we were talking, De Wet's army might be caught in one of Kitchener's wire entanglements, and the war be brought to an end, and I remember that very often as I stared at him across the studio my thoughts would resolve into a prayer that the means might be put into my hands to humiliate this detestable England, this brutal people! A prayer not very likely to be answered, and I wondered at my folly while I prayed. Yet it was answered.

Every week letters came to me from South Africa, as they came to every other Englishman, Irishman, and Scotchman, and it is not likely that any of these letters contained news that others did not read in their letters or in the newspapers; but soon after my prayer in Sickert's studio, a letter was put into my hands containing news so terrific that for a long time I sat, unable to

think, bewildered, holding myself in check, resisting the passion that nearly compelled me to run into the street and cry aloud the plan that an English General had devised. De Wet was in the angle formed by the junction of two rivers; the rivers were in flood; he could go neither back nor forwards; and troops were being marched along either bank, the superior officers of every regiment receiving orders, so my correspondent informed me, that firing was not to cease when De Wet was caught in the triangle and the white flag raised. My correspondent said, and justly it appeared to me, in my indignant acceptance of the story, that if notice had been given at the beginning of the war quarter would not be asked for nor given, we might have said, "This is too horrible," and covered our faces, but we should not have been able to charge our Generals with treachery. But no such notice had been given, and he reminded me that we were accepting quarter from the Boers at the rate of eight hundred a day. "A murder plot, pure and simple, having nothing to do with any warfare waged by Europeans for many centuries. It must be stopped, and publication will stop it. But is there a newspaper in London that will publish it?" One or two were tried, and in vain. "And while you dally with me," I cried, "De Wet and his army may be massacred. Only in Ireland is there any sense of right."

And next day, in Dublin, I dictated the story to the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Times* reprinted it, and the editor of a Cape paper copied it from the *Times*, upon which the military authorities in South Africa disowned and repudiated the plot. If they had not done so, the whole of Cape Colony, as I thought, would have risen against us; and once the plot was repudiated, the Boers were safe; it would be impossible to revive the methods of Tamburlaine on another occasion. The Boer nation was saved and England punished, and in her ca-

pacious pocket that she loves so well. The war, I reflected, was costing England two millions a week, and with the white flag respected, it will last some years longer; at the very lowest estimate my publication will cost England two hundred millions. The calculation put an alertness into my step, and I walked forth, believing myself to be the instrument chosen by God whereby an unswerving, strenuous, Protestant people were saved from the designs of the lascivious and corrupt Jew, and the stupid machinations of a nail-maker in Birmingham.

In a humbler and more forgiving mood I might have looked upon myself as having saved England from a crime that would have cried shame after her till the end of history. A great delirium of the intellect and the senses had overtaken Englishmen at that time, and how far they had wandered from their true selves can be guessed from the fact that that great and good man Kruger, who loved God and his fellow-countrymen, was scorned throughout the whole British press—and why? Because he read his Bible. Even to the point of ridiculing the reading of the Bible did a Birmingham nail-maker beguile the English people from their true selves.

There is great joy in believing oneself to be God's instrument, and it seemed to me, as I walked, that my mission had ended in England with the exposure of the murder plan, and that I had earned my right to France, to my own instinctive friends, to the language that should have been mine; and it was while thinking that England was now behind me, and forever, that a presence seemed to gather, or rather, seemed to follow me as I went towards Chelsea. The first sensation was thin, but it deepened at every moment, and when I entered the Hospital Road I did not dare to look behind me, yet not for fear lest my eyes should see something they had never seen before, something not of this world. I walked in a sort of devout collectedness awaiting what was to happen, and very

soon, half-way down the road, I heard a voice, not an inner, but an external voice as from somebody close behind me, saying, "Go to Ireland!" The voice was so distinct and clear that I could not but turn to look. Nobody was within many yards of me.

The order, impressive in itself, coming as it did out of nothing, was made perhaps still more impressive by the fact that the way I had come to Chelsea was through Ebury Street, and it was in Ebury Street that I had been stopped by the discovery that I no longer desired a victory for our troops in South Africa, but one for the Boers. I walked on, but had not taken many steps before I heard the voice again. "Order your manuscripts and your pictures and your furniture to be packed at once, and go to Ireland." Of this I am sure—that the words "Go to Ireland" did not come from within, but from without. The minutes passed by, and I waited to hear the voice again, but I could hear nothing except my own thoughts telling me that no Messiah had been found by me at the dinner at the Shelbourne Hotel because the Messiah Ireland was waiting for was in me and not in another.

"So the summons has come," I said—"the summons has come"; and I walked, greatly shaken in my mind, feeling that it would be impossible for me to keep my appointment with the lady who had asked me to tea that evening. To chatter with her about indifferent things would be impossible, and I returned to Victoria Street unable to think of anything else but the voice that had spoken to me; its tone, its *timbre,* lingered in my ear through that day and the next, and for many days my recollection did not seem to grow weaker. All the same I remained doubtful; at all events, unconvinced of the authenticity of the summons that I had received. It was hard to abandon my project of going to live in my own country, which was France, and I said to myself, "If the summons be

a real one and no delusion of the senses, it will be repeated." Next morning, as I lay between sleeping and waking, I heard the words, "Go to Ireland! Go to Ireland!" repeated by the same voice, and this time it was close by me, speaking into my ear. It seemed to speak within five or six inches, and it was so clear and distinct that I put out my hand to detain the speaker. "The same voice," I said to myself; "the same words, only this time the words were repeated twice. When I hear them again they will be repeated three times. Then I shall know."

But our experience in life never enables us to divine what our destiny may be, nor the manner in which it may be revealed to us. The voice was not heard again, but a few weeks afterwards, in my drawing-room, the presence seemed to fill the room, and it overpowered me; and though I strove to resist it, in the end it forced me upon my knees, and a prayer was put into my mouth. I prayed, but to whom I prayed I do not know, only that I was conscious of a presence about me and that I prayed. Doubt was no longer possible. I had been summoned to Ireland!

When I told my friends of my intention to leave London, and for ever, they were disheartened, and tried to dissuade me, and one after the other brought some new argument, all of which were unavailing. Tonks collected some friends to dinner; Steer and Sickert were among the company, and it was pointed out to me that no man could break up his life as I proposed to break up mine with impunity.

"It is no use. Nothing that you can say will change me."

My manner must have impressed them; they must have felt that my departure was decreed by some unseen authority, and that, no doubt, the Boer War had made any further stay in England impossible to me.

THE END